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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**Second Session, 39th Parliament**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**Deuxième session, 39^e législature**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)****Journal
des débats
(Hansard)****Monday 4 April 2011****Lundi 4 avril 2011**Speaker
Honourable Steve PetersClerk
Deborah DellerPrésident
L'honorable Steve PetersGreffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 4 April 2011

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 4 avril 2011

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Buddhist prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would like to introduce to the House the guests of Daniel Mateus, who is our page from St. Catharines: mother, Liliana Mateus; father, Carolipo Mateus; sister Sarah Mateus; and friends Miriam Vasen and Karl Navarro. They are in the gallery, or they are going to be in the gallery sometime today. Welcome.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm pleased to introduce the parents of page Sydney O'Brien, whose family is visiting us from my riding. Pat O'Brien and his wife, Kristine O'Brien, are pleased to have their daughter as a page. I believe that Sharon O'Brien, the grandmother, is also here, along with Sandy Wheller, who is an aunt. Welcome to the Legislature.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'm delighted to introduce my good friend Dr. Susan Tamblyn of Stratford. I introduce her on behalf of my colleague the member for Oak Ridges–Markham.

Dr. Tamblyn is a leading world expert when it comes to public health. She's a former medical officer of health for Perth county, and she currently serves our province as the co-chair of the Ontario pandemic influenza health steering committee and is chair of the antivirals working group for the national pandemic influenza committee. Welcome, Susan.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I ask for unanimous consent to wear the daffodil pin for Cancer Month in April.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I would like to introduce members from the Canadian Diabetes Association up in this gallery. They'll be meeting with different people today, and from 12 to 1 they have a reception in committee room 2.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I would like to introduce Mr. and Mrs. Thirunavukkarasu, who are the parents of my legislative assistant. They came to Canada from Sri Lanka just a few years ago, and their son, who works on our staff, just finished his accounting degree at Ryerson and is on his way to be a CA within a decade. I think that's the extraordinary Canadian story being played out again. I'd like to welcome them.

Mr. Dave Levac: Today at Queen's Park many of us are being visited by members from ACTRA to talk about issues pertaining to their profession. Today I was able to meet with people—Sesame Street, Little Mosque on the Prairie etc. Anyway, they're here to talk to the Legislature about some very serious issues. I'd like to welcome all of those fine actors and actresses from our profession here in Ontario. We welcome them today at Queen's Park and we thank them for being here.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Last week's budget basically showed that you've thrown up your hands and that you've given up on trying to fix the incredible mess you've made with your reckless, run-away government spending. In fact, on page 71 of your budget, you announced that you've hired a Bay Street banker, Don Drummond, to fix the mess for you.

I ask you, Premier: When you gave direction to your Bay Street banker, which taxes have you asked your hand-picked Bay Street banker to look at to increase in the McGuinty government?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to receive the question from my honourable colleague. I would encourage him to speak with the member for Durham, a representative in his party, who said this about Mr. Drummond: "Some of the leaders on this forum are quite distinguished, of no partisan affiliation, in our communities. I'm going to mention one of them: Don Drummond, who's ... one of the most respected economists when we look at budget day here in Ontario. Who do we look to when we want an objective, informed opinion? We look to Don Drummond."

I recommend that to my honourable colleague.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I wonder when it was that Don Drummond was elected to the Legislature and put in the McGuinty cabinet.

Basically, Premier, you have put our province into receivership, and you've hired a Bay Street banker to be our chief restructuring officer. We believe that you're considering a one- or two-point increase to the HST, and we wonder if your Bay Street banker is going to bring that forward. Basically, you have handed over the keys to cabinet office to a Bay Street banker, the very same

banker who recommended the HST tax grab that has taken money out of Ontario families' pockets.

Premier, please be direct: Are tax increases on the table for your Bay Street banker, or will you simply recommend cuts to health care and education?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would argue that Ontarians do have some real concerns. For example, last week, through our budget, we announced an \$8.4-billion investment in Toronto transit. Ontarians want to understand whether they're going to put a cut to the HST ahead of the investment that we're making in public transit in the city of Toronto.

This morning I spoke with Ontario farmers. They're very drawn to and very supportive of our new risk management program. Again, they want to know whether the party opposite is going to put a cut to the HST ahead of their brand new risk management program.

I say to my honourable colleague opposite: A party without a plan is a party that won't take a stand. The people of Ontario are becoming ever more interested in exactly what is happening inside that party over there.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, Ontario families want to know: Where are you going to get the money for your reckless increase in government spending? Are you going to increase—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just remind the honourable members that it is important that—stop the clock, please. For question period, I find that a number of the interjections are not helpful to maintaining decorum in this chamber. I'd just ask members to be cognizant of that.

Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, clearly you're going to increase the HST by a point or two. You're going to bring in the carbon tax. Families just want you to be honest and tell them what new tax increase you have planned today.

Premier, the problem is that you have ducked any kind of leadership of getting your spending under control. You have now contracted that out to a Bay Street banker to make the decisions that you could not make. And when asked by the Globe and Mail if cuts to health care and education by the McGuinty Liberals were on the table, Mr. Drummond said they absolutely were.

1040

Premier, do you agree with your hand-picked Bay Street banker who says he absolutely has to consider that the Liberal government will cut health care and education? What exactly is on the table?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's all spelled out very clearly inside our budget document. It's all spelled out in our plan that we've been putting forward, in front of the people of Ontario, for eight years now. For example, on page 71 of the Ontario budget, "The commission will not make recommendations that would increase taxes or lead to the privatization of health care or education." I think it's there in black and white.

Our concern is that in the absence of a plan, the only thing we can do is draw on history when it comes to the plan that the party opposite would put forward. That means that they plan to make cuts to health care. They would cut it by \$3 billion; they don't support the Ontario health premium. They've called full-day kindergarten a frill; they are not champions of full-day kindergarten in the province of Ontario. We know that they want to return to firing up coal-fired plants in Ontario as well. Again, until that party puts forward a solid plan, all we can do is infer what they will do based on their history.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: On one hand, you say that the Liberals will not cut health care, but the very next day, your hand-picked Bay Street banker says that he will recommend that the Liberals absolutely cut health care and education. So who, exactly, is running the show? Is it Mr. Drummond, your hand-picked Bay Street banker? Is it your cabinet? You say one thing one day and you say the opposite the next—a sad reality when it comes to the Liberal government.

Premier, your friend Mr. Drummond recommended in the past that we bring in the HST. You did so—a big tax increase on families. Now Mr. Drummond is recommending that the Liberal government cut health care and education. So is that mandate on the table? Is it not? Who's telling the truth? Is it you or is it your hand-picked Bay Street banker, Mr. Drummond?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I don't—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I was going to say that I don't get to advise my honourable colleague opposite, but I would suggest to him that of all the trees he might bark up, this is the wrong one.

He's trying to convince Ontarians that we're going to cut their health care; he's trying to convince Ontarians that we're going to cut their education. Let's just for a moment consider the record. Ninety-four per cent of Ontarians now have a family doctor. We're building 18 new hospitals; they closed them. We've hired 11,000 nurses; I think they fired 6,300. We have 200 family health teams, and we now have the shortest wait times in the country.

When it comes to education, I think we have 10,000 more teachers, class sizes are down, test scores are up, graduation rates are up and we're creating 260,000 more spaces in our colleges, universities and apprenticeships.

Again, I say with respect to my honourable colleague: He's barking up the wrong tree.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, the reality is that you have now put the Bay Street banker Mr. Drummond in charge of the purse strings. You have promised to rein in spending; you have failed to do so. You said you would achieve a public service wage freeze; you've failed. You said you would free up resources by streamlining agen-

cies; you've failed. While the economy has grown by 9%, government spending under Premier McGuinty has gone up not 7%, not 17%, but 77%, more than eight times the growth rate of the economy.

You've lost control when it comes to government spending; you've handed it off to a Bay Street banker to make the decisions. You say that health cuts are off the table; Mr. Drummond says the McGuinty Liberals are going to cut health and education. Which will it be? Ontario families know they can't believe a word this Premier says.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The Minister of Education will please come to order. It's quite obvious that everyone had an enjoyable weekend. Premier?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Except for Norm, of course. He didn't have a good weekend.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Minister of Consumer Services, I just sat down, and the moment I sat down, you interjected. Your interjection was actually interrupting your Premier.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think it was President Bill Clinton who once said that you'd have to be out of your mind to want to be led by a pessimist. I have a very optimistic view of the future and everything that Ontarians are doing together to secure a bright future.

My friend is having some fun with math. Here are some real numbers. Just last Friday, we created another 750 new jobs by partnering with business in Ontario. There are 80 new jobs in Mississauga at Pratt and Whitney, 100 new jobs in Ottawa at Best Theratronics, 50 new jobs in Vaughan at Sungrow Canada, 40 new jobs in Belleville at Kellogg Canada, and five new jobs that involve increasing flight service in Sault Ste. Marie and the surrounding First Nations communities at Eagle Feather Aviation.

I believe the people of Ontario are inherently hopeful and optimistic. They want a positive plan about how we can keep working together to secure a bright future for our children. That's what we're doing on this side of the House—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, what I hear is that people across Ontario—mums and dads, seniors and students—want to see change in our province that will give them relief and treat them with the respect they deserve.

Premier, Mr. Drummond, the Bay Street banker, is your guy. He's your hand-picked man. Your hand-picked Bay Street banker said that the McGuinty Liberals were considering cuts to health care and education. We know that the same Bay Street banker previously recommended that the McGuinty government bring in an HST tax grab, and you did so. He seems to have your ear, and now, because of your decision in your budget, you have given him the keys to the cabinet office. We actually have plans to involve MPPs, our elected members, to review the

waste in agencies, boards and commissions. You gave it over to a Bay Street banker.

Premier, won't you come clean? What is on the table with Mr. Drummond? Is it an increase in his favourite tax, the HST, or cuts to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague says he wants to involve his MPPs, but apparently not all of them. There was a considerable change made just recently.

I think Ontarians can take some considerable comfort in reviewing our record and, specifically, what we've done to improve the quality of public services, especially public education, public health care, protection of our environment, the partnerships that we've entered into with the private sector to create more jobs, the reforms that we're bringing to taxes, the fact that we are rebuilding our electricity system—something that is absolutely essential to do to secure that bright future.

I think that if there are lingering concerns or outstanding fears, they're concerned about the cuts that the party opposite wants to make to health care, they're concerned about them shutting down full-day kindergarten in Ontario, and they're concerned about their cuts to environmental protection—the kinds of things that we worked so hard together with the people of Ontario to shore up, to inspire confidence in, over the course of eight years.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The annual sunshine list was released last week, and once again Ontarians saw health care executives receiving half-million-dollar-plus salaries. When will the McGuinty government finally take real measures to rein in these excessive executive CEO pay packages?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'll speak to this at the highest level, and then my colleague may want to speak to some of this.

The leader of the NDP knows that we have made a number of important announcements in the budget to help us manage our expenditures, including the fact that we have committed to cutting by 10% executive offices in major agencies and our transfer partners. I think that is a real and meaningful way to get at an issue which, I agree with my honourable colleague, is a real concern. We've got to make sure we are managing those costs. We've got to make sure that, especially when it comes to health care, those dollars get down to the front lines as much as we possibly can. I would recommend that particular initiative to my honourable colleague, and I would ask for her support there.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The McGuinty government's efforts to rein in public sector executive salaries are completely inadequate, if not utterly laughable.

When front-line health care workers are losing their jobs, how can the Premier justify the fact that a consum-

mate Liberal insider like Credit Valley Hospital CEO Michelle DiEmanuele went from making \$410,000 to more than \$450,000?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.
1050

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We welcome transparency. We welcome accountability. We believe that Ontarians have the right to know where their taxpayers' dollars are going. That's why we're taking the steps we have taken to make our hospital leaders more accountable. In fact, under the recent excellent care for all initiative, a portion of the hospitals' compensation will be tied to quality indicators. We think it's important that there are ways we can measure leadership, and that their compensation be tied to that.

As the Premier said in our recent budget, we've gone even further. Over the next two years, we are reducing by 10% the amount of money spent in those executive offices. We think that the more money we can move to front-line care, the better we—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The McGuinty government's efforts have been a miserable failure so far, from what we can tell.

I'll tell you what New Democrats believe: We believe that there should be a hard cap on public sector executive salaries, plain and simple, to prevent the abuses that we continue to see, notwithstanding what this minister's comments are. As an example, former Deputy Health Minister Ron Sapsford was paid \$673,000 in salary and \$89,000 in benefits in 2010, even though he resigned from the provincial government in November 2009.

What exactly was Mr. Sapsford paid three quarters of a million dollars for in 2010? Was it a golden handshake that the Premier was hoping nobody would notice?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have to say, I regret the cynicism that is so apparent in the question from the leader of the third party. We are absolutely committed to getting better value for our taxpayer dollars when it comes to health care, and we have the results to demonstrate that we are getting better health care for people.

One of the things that we are doing is that we are tying the hospitals to accountability agreements. Our LHINs, our local health integration networks, have an agreement with every single hospital in this province to achieve certain results within a certain budget. The results are that, taken as a whole, our hospitals are on budget or have a plan to get there.

There was a day when hospitals ran wild deficits—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. Unfortunately for Ontario families being squeezed for every last nickel and dime, the sweetheart deals cut by the McGuinty Liberal government know no bounds. The notorious former eHealth boss Sarah

Kramer, who was fired in 2009, still managed to rake in \$107,000 in 2010. How is that appropriate?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Of all the parties in this Legislature, I would expect that the NDP would be the party that would say that we should honour existing contracts. That is exactly what we see reflected in the sunshine list.

This is an annual affair around here when the sunshine list comes out, and members of the opposition—and I have to confess, we ourselves look very closely at the sunshine list to understand some of those numbers. The fact is that when some people leave employment, there is an agreement. We honour and respect those agreements.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The problem is that there doesn't seem to be anybody minding the store over there. A former Waterloo hospital CEO got \$750,000 in severance. Another in Cambridge got \$650,000 on his way out the door. In Niagara, they still don't know how much their ousted CEO is going to get.

New Democrats would protect the interests of Ontarians by making sure that these backroom sweetheart deals are a thing of the past. In fact, I'm going to be introducing a bill this week requiring public sector employers to disclose severance payments that are more than \$100,000. Are the Premier and his caucus going to support this bill?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Like the member opposite, we are committed to getting best value for taxpayer dollars when it comes to health care. I'm enormously proud of the results that people working in health care have achieved for the people who rely on them for care. We now have 94% of Ontarians with access to primary care. That is an increase of over a million people more than when we were elected.

We've been able to work very hard to bring down wait times so that people are waiting far less than they did under the previous government when it comes to procedures like hip replacement, knee replacement, cancer care, cardiac care, cataract surgery. Those wait times are down. We've made a meaningful difference for people when it comes to health care in this province.

I want to take this opportunity to say thank you to all the people who—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What is happening under this government's watch is, quite frankly, offensive. As vital health services and front-line staff are slashed in communities across Ontario, health care executives, on and off the job, are cashing in.

New Democrats want to rein in these excessive compensation packages and sweetheart severance deals. Will the government support us on this or will they continue to look the other way while Ontarians are taken for a ride by well-connected health care insiders?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I just think it's time, especially on an issue that is as important as health care, that we actually have some facts on the table. The member opposite talks about slashing and burning. Let me just tell

you what's happening in Hamilton when it comes to jobs. At Hamilton Health Sciences there are 20 more doctors working and 68 more nurses working; at St. Joseph's Healthcare in Hamilton, 10 more doctors and 32—I'm sorry; these are the numbers of doctors and nurses on the sunshine list. Twenty doctors, 68 nurses at Hamilton Health Sciences; at St. Joe's, 10 doctors, 32 nurses.

The sunshine list has changed over time as inflation has increased the number of people. We're seeing our front-line health care workers on those sunshine lists. I tell you: I wonder what the member opposite would do. Does she want to cut the salary of nurses?

HOME CARE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. Today the Ontario Health Coalition is releasing a new report that confirms what the Ontario PCs have been saying all along. Ontario's home care system is too bureaucratic and too much money is being diverted from front-line patient care to level upon level of bureaucracy. In fact, the report notes that home care dollars are transferred through four levels of bureaucracy before reaching the front lines. And now you've appointed a Bay Street banker to review health spending, adding a fifth level.

Do you think five levels of bureaucracy is too much, too little or just right?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I know that everyone wants to see as much of our health care dollars going to front-line health care, and that is why we are working very hard to actually shift spending to the front lines. What we have done in the last budget is reduce executive office spending by 10% over two years. That money will all go to the front lines.

When it comes to home care, I have to tell you that it's kind of astonishing to me that the party opposite would be criticizing our record on home care, given that 200,000 more people are receiving home care now than under their watch. More people are receiving home care; more people are receiving care to help them stay at home, to help them come home from the hospital in a safe environment. We have increased spending tremendously when it comes to home care, and I'm proud of our record.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The fact is that one of the five levels that stand in the way of money going to front-line health care is your unelected, unaccountable local health integration networks. Over \$250 million have been wasted at the LHINs alone. That's money that should have been spent caring for our loved ones at home, where they want to be. Instead, you use the money to pay the high-priced salaries of your LHIN executives. Will you finally take our advice, close the door on the LHINs and invest the money into front-line patient care, or are you so out of touch with Ontario families that you just don't get it anymore?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite might want to read an article that was published in the

London Free Press over the weekend by Gerry Macartney, who is the chief executive of the London Chamber of Commerce. Gerry Macartney says, "It's not often I find myself changing my position on an issue, but as new information and more detail become available, even an old policy wonk like me can be persuaded. Such is the case with the local health integrated networks...."

Gerry Macartney concludes his article by saying, "Are LHINs good for us? So far, pimples and all, they are a darn sight better than what we had, they are a lot more transparent and accountable than what we had, they seem to be producing the desired results and so far, I have heard of no one offering a better solution or a return to what was there before." So that's the answer—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1100

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Ontario households are struggling to pay their soaring utility bills. Enbridge and Union Gas go door to door to help families wrap pipes, insulate attics and seal cracks.

With increased funding, conservation programs could help Ontarians save almost a billion dollars over the next six years. Why is your minister allowing the OEB to freeze funding for these money-saving programs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to take the question. My honourable colleague will know that we've in fact made tremendous efforts when it comes to demand-side management, encouraging Ontarians to adopt conservation practices. We have a number of programs in place.

For an objective perspective, there's an organization, whose name now escapes me, which recently assessed us as having gone from, I think it was, a D minus to an A or an A plus when it comes to Ontario as a whole and our conservation efforts. We in fact have come a very long way.

I would encourage Ontarians to continue to be informed by the sentiment, I think earnestly expressed by my colleague opposite, that all of us need to find ways, every day in terms of how we lead our lives, where it's possible for us to make investments to adopt conservation practices.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Freezing a program is a strange way to show support for it. Last July, your energy minister said he would "support efforts by the OEB to expand" conservation efforts. The OEB staff agreed that increased spending on conservation programs would lead to real savings on gas bills, but the OEB has refused to increase funding for conservation, a decision that this minister says he now supports.

Why won't this government order the OEB to expand energy-efficient funding and help more families reduce their gas bills?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It was the Canadian Energy Efficiency Alliance that gave Ontario an A plus for energy conservation in 2009, up from a C minus in 2004.

Again, I hear what my colleague is saying, but I'm finding it hard to reconcile with the position that they have taken in opposition to time-of-use meters, which enable families, businesses and farmers to adopt better environmental practices. It's the kind of technology that's being adopted all around the world. It's one of those things that enables Ontarians, especially families—with the new change in our time-of-use times, so that the discount period will kick in at 7 o'clock in the evening as opposed to 9 o'clock, it's going to be much more practical and simple for families to adopt more energy conservation practices.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, climate change is something every government must deal with, and Ontario is no exception. The McGuinty government has already made great progress by shutting down dirty, coal-fired plants. I'm proud to say that in my riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, wind, solar and bioenergy are playing a big role in cleaning up our air.

But there are still concerns about our government's approach to renewable energies. On Saturday, a protest rally marched to my office in Strathroy to ensure that I heard those concerns. The majority of them came from other parts of Ontario, but I was pleased to meet with all of them.

They are very concerned about the scientific rigour behind our regulations for wind turbines. I made a commitment to those at the protest that I would bring their concerns to this assembly. Minister, has your ministry received any scientific evidence that wind turbines harm people's health?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my colleague for the question. Let's be clear: The answer to that question is no. We undertook a rigorous and thorough study when we developed our regulations. That's why we have legislated in the province of Ontario a 550-metre setback, which is the toughest in North America.

The Superior Court recently upheld all of our provisions, agreeing that we had reviewed and based them on peer-reviewed science and expert opinions. Dr. Hazel Lynn acknowledges in her recent report that windmills are "not that bothersome to most people" who hear or live near them. We even reviewed every report given to us by the Society for Wind Vigilance from their recent symposium. Not one report contained new peer-reviewed science about health effects that we had not already considered.

We received a mandate from the people of Ontario to close coal-fired and replace—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I know my constituents who are supportive of renewable energy will be glad to hear that wind turbines are safe.

Some residents, however, are equally concerned about repeated musings by members of the party opposite about

maintaining our use of coal. Ralph Ferguson, a former federal Minister of Agriculture, did a study in the Brooke-Alvinston area of my riding that clearly demonstrated the impact of dirty air on the high incidence of respiratory disorders and cancer rates in that community. Residents are willing to do their part to clean the air, but they want to know that the government is there as well.

My question to the minister is quite simple: With many Tories still supporting coal-fired generation, will the McGuinty government continue to increase renewable energy so that we can eliminate coal from our energy mix and improve the environment of my constituents?

Hon. John Wilkinson: Our commitment to renewable energy and conservation is stronger today than it has ever been. Why? Because we have the facts on our side.

Coal plants emit lead, mercury, dioxins, chromium, arsenic, sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide. They are the number one reason that the children of Ontario are admitted to emergency rooms. We know that as a scientific fact. The Ontario Medical Association tells us that 150 of our fellow citizens die needlessly because of coal-fired generation, and that's why we stand with the registered nurses of Ontario, with the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, with the Ontario coalition of family physicians, with the asthma society, with the lung society and with the lung association: because we know that the dirty love affair that the members opposite have with coal—those days are coming—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. Premier McGuinty, you keep wasting and spending taxpayer resources while the Ontario PC caucus has a committed plan to cut wasteful spending. Two weeks ago, the Ontario PC leader introduced his sunset review bill that would keep programs that work, fix the ones that need fixing, and take those programs that are beyond repair and put those resources back into front-line health care and relief for families.

You rejected our good plan when it was tabled. A week later you hastily assembled your own plan, led by a Bay Street banker who says you approached him just two days earlier. The question: How can we take you seriously, and why are you treating spending restraint like a public relations scheme instead of fixing the programs for Ontario families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question, but I think maybe I missed something; maybe there should be a news flash; something should go onto the wire right away. There's a reference to some kind of a plan that they put out, and that's the first I hear of it here.

But here's what I do know: I do know that a very good predictor of the future is what has happened in the past. This is a party that's absolutely committed to getting rid of the Ontario health premium. That's \$3 billion that would come out of our health care system. That would

result in the loss of thousands of nurses, hospital closures, and longer wait times. This is also a party that is committed to the shutdown of full-day kindergarten in the province of Ontario. That will stand to the detraction of some 247,000 four- and five-year-old children.

Again, we have a plan. It's a solid plan. We've been acting on the plan. We'd like to ask: Where's their plan?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: In case he has missed something, here's the news flash: He has closed hospital ERs, he has shut down schools and he has raised our taxes, so if you want to talk about best predictors of the future, we'll look at your past and that's what we'll talk about, because you have no ideas of your own to get this spending in this province under control. You've given up trying, so you contracted out the job to a Bay Street lawyer who came up with the HST that you're forcing Ontario families to pay. But this wasn't, of course, before you looked over the shoulder of Tim Hudak and cribbed the notes for how to reduce spending in this province and get front-line care back on track. But even then, the issue that you're putting forward is half-baked, with a half-baked measure.

1110

The question is: Why should Ontario families trust Bay Street bankers accountable to the Premier to do a better job of protecting front-line health care when MPPs in this chamber—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'd like to say that their plan is half-baked, but it's not even half-baked. I don't think it's a quarter baked or an eighth baked, for that matter; I don't think it's been put into the oven yet.

The question that we need to ask ourselves is: What is it that the PCs of Ontario are so afraid of sharing with the people of Ontario? Why won't they come clean with their specifics? It's simply because they want to reduce the HST. For every point that we take out of that, that's \$3 billion. That will result in cuts to our health care, closures to hospitals, loss of nurses, loss of teachers, closure of schools and a general deterioration of the quality of public services which we are so committed to. That's why they don't want to talk about the specifics of their plan.

ONTARIO ARTISTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: ACTRA joins us at the Legislature today. They're looking for protection of the economic and bargaining rights of Ontario artists. In December 2010, my private member's bill would have delivered those protections. It passed second reading, but it has sat idle in committee since then.

Can the government tell ACTRA if they will support this bill's movement through the Legislature?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let me begin by saying how much we value the outstanding contributions brought to us by the members of the film and acting industry. They employed over 304,000 Ontarians in 2010, and that's a 15% increase from last year.

I look forward to meeting with the members from ACTRA this afternoon in my office. I know they're here. They themselves have reinforced that they've turned the corner. The tax incentives that we've provided for them have provided tremendous incentive for the film industry. That's why, in Ontario, we are number one when it comes to being the film industry in North America.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I haven't heard such unbridled enthusiasm in ages. But "ages" is a relative term. In 2007, the McGuinty government made a commitment to move forward on these issues of vital importance. Yet four years later, artists only have a symbolic day that does nothing to ensure the economic and employment rights of artists.

Artists need more than tokens of thanks; they need real protection. Why is your government dragging its feet on these issues?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let me be clear: All of our film industry employees do have protection within our industry. They have opportunities to go before the courts—I know, through the collective agreements, they're there—but more importantly, our tax credits, like the Ontario production service tax credit. Some \$155 million was introduced to maintain the competitiveness of the industry, including tax credits for film and television, and the Ontario computer animation and special effects tax credit of \$25 million.

The health and safety of paid performers of any age while working is protected under the Ontario health and safety act, and that includes health and safety protection and adult supervision with qualified supervisors with regard to children. Health and safety awareness and training practices are required, and protection regarding hours of work and the right to refuse work are also considerations.

We should be very proud of our film industry in Ontario.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Rick Johnson: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, Ontario families know that a sustainable water source is vital to our well-being and our way of life. A great deal of the world's fresh water is found right in our own backyard in the Great Lakes.

A key plank of the Open Ontario act is to ensure Ontario becomes a centre of excellence in developing clean water technology. Many in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock are working towards the goal of creating a local clean water centre of excellence. Ontario has already been identified as a leader in the emerging market of clean water, a clean driver of economic prosperity.

Minister, protecting the environment by creating good green jobs seems to be a priority for the McGuinty government, but will becoming a leader in clean water technology put Ontario's water resources at risk?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my friend for the question.

We live in an increasingly thirsty world. Economists estimate that there's a global market of some \$400 billion a year. We have 22,000 people in Ontario today working in the clean technology sector. When it comes to clean water, we have a world that is thirsty, and right here in Ontario we have the innovative companies that can meet that demand and be good neighbours to the rest of the world. We are the stewards of one of the greatest concentrations of fresh water on this planet.

It's important for us to be able to export our technology and create good jobs right here in Ontario. Twenty-two thousand jobs in clean technology is not enough. We want more of those jobs, and that's exactly why we passed the Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act. I want to applaud the member and the people in his riding who see that great opportunity for great new jobs—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Johnson: Minister, my constituents will be reassured by your response. I believe they all realize that the only way to have a strong economy is to have a strong environment.

However, there is also a growing concern about the direction the opposition would take with clean water technologies. They voted against it, and with—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I trust you're going to tie this into government policy.

Mr. Rick Johnson: There's growing concern about the clean water technologies the members opposite voted against, and with the nomination of the newest candidate in Carleton-Mississippi Mills, there's an increasing push—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd remind the honourable member that his question needs to be about government policy.

Mr. Rick Johnson: Minister, can you clarify for the House the effect that this would have on the province?

Hon. John Wilkinson: We've learned from history what happens when we have a government that decides that they don't believe in water inspectors, when they slash conservation authorities.

I have an interesting quote here from someone who I think is well respected by this House but unfortunately may not be here for much longer. He said that he felt there were people in the province of Ontario who "don't believe in conservation authorities, they don't believe in milk marketing boards (and) they go so far as to say, 'Let's abandon our planning laws in the province of Ontario.'"

On this side of the House, our team is loyal to the leader because our leader is loyal to his team. That's what's important in the province of Ontario: that we have the leadership to make sure that we can maintain the highest quality of regulation, that we believe in our public servants and that they play a valuable role. It's so important when it comes to clean water in the province of Ontario.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. As recently as Saturday morning,

Lambton-Kent-Middlesex residents and their neighbours rallied to send a message to you and your government that they will no longer be ignored. Countless communities across our province have told you they're fed up with watching helplessly as your government pushes to install industrial wind farms all over, whenever and wherever it wants, with no regard for local expertise or the concern of residents.

Minister, last week you told my colleague from Wellington-Halton Hills that you "are all about ensuring that the public and municipalities have their say." Well, Minister, are these people wrong and you're right, or will you finally admit that you've stripped municipalities of decision-making powers?

Hon. John Wilkinson: Let's just remember that the party opposite voted against the Clean Energy Act. I don't know whether it was the clean part or the energy part that they didn't understand.

In the province of Ontario, we are revolutionizing our sources of power because our children are counting on us. I say to the member opposite that the number one reason that children in your riding go to the emergency rooms is because of poor air quality.

It is important for us to clean up our sources of power in this province. Now—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members from Renfrew, Simcoe North and Burlington, please come to order. The member from Haldimand-Norfolk. The member from Renfrew.

Minister?

Hon. John Wilkinson: The truth shall set them free over there. I say to them, talk to the Ontario Medical Association, talk to the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, talk to the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment. What they tell us is that we need to clean up our sources of power because we are paying for it with needless pain and suffering in our health care system, and paying those bills as well. That's why we are committed—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

1120

Mr. Robert Bailey: We're going to set you free in October, Minister.

To the minister: 81-year-old Stephana Johnston, slowed by her walker but energized by her passion, joined this protest which marched in Strathroy Saturday last. Her message to you and your government is this: "We are suffering and it is a horror story, and you are responsible because you agreed to the Green Energy Act."

Minister, in Long Point, Mrs. Johnston has a say on the location of a new Tim Hortons, a Mac's Milk or a 7-Eleven, but not an industrial wind farm near her home.

Minister, I ask you: Who's right—Mrs. Johnston and the thousands of names on her petition, or do you know best?

Hon. John Wilkinson: It comes down to a very simple question.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Lanark, member from Durham.

Minister?

Hon. John Wilkinson: It comes down to a very simple question: Do you believe in clean air or not? Do you believe in trying to clean up the environment for our children and our grandchildren or do you not? I can assure people that we will not make an approval unless the public and our municipalities are consulted. We will say no unless they have had an opportunity to tell us their concerns—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the honourable members to please come to order. We have a number of guests here today who want to enjoy question period but they're having difficulties because of the interjections.

Minister?

Hon. John Wilkinson: As I was saying, it comes down to a very simple value question: You either believe in clean air for our children and our grandchildren and you'll do what's required to make sure that we break our addiction to coal-fired generation—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Are you going to shut them down in Ohio?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew: Speaking of shutting down—

Hon. John Wilkinson: —or you believe that it is important for us to do the right thing.

Surely to God, Mother Nature is sending us every signal. Surely to God, the cost that we're paying in the Ministry of Health to look after people who are ill needlessly is something that we can—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

RETIREMENT HOMES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. On Friday, a Timmins senior died tragically in a retirement home fire. At the time of the fire, Linda Desjardins was the only staff member working at the home. Linda was courageous and she was quick. Because of her actions and those of the Timmins Fire Department, almost all of the residents in the home were ushered to safety. But the community is questioning whether this tragedy could have been prevented if more staff were actually working at the home.

My question is this: Why has this government refused to ensure adequate staffing levels in retirement homes in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Revenue.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: First, let me just say that, without a doubt, what happened in Timmins was a tragic event, and our thoughts and prayers go out to the family.

What I can say is that I heard that the community in Timmins all gathered together to help all the people who were in that home. We know that all the seniors are safe,

and as the minister responsible for seniors, our priority was to make sure that everyone was safe. We know that they are safe and I know that the fire marshal's office is investigating that fire.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This government and this minister's retirement home regulation has been a failure and borders on negligence. Experts have been urging the McGuinty Liberals to ensure adequate staffing levels as well as ironclad plans for fire safety. Yet today, the regulations remain grossly inadequate and seniors remain vulnerable in retirement homes from one end of this province to the other.

When will this Premier and his minister move to actually protect seniors so that tragedies like this one can be prevented in the future?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: First of all, let me just say again how saddened we were to hear about the tragedy.

When the member opposite talks about the Retirement Homes Act, for the first time in Ontario's history we are regulating retirement homes. It is extremely important. Unfortunately, it was that party that did not agree to the Retirement Homes Act.

Let me just talk a little bit about the stronger protections in the Retirement Homes Act when it comes to fire safety. The act will require that retirement homes have a specific emergency plan. We will train all staff in fire prevention and safety. We will post an action plan in case of a fire. We will include information about the staffing levels and whether the home has sprinklers in each room—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Last week's budget revolved around a theme of prudent fiscal management while protecting the services that matter most to Ontarians, services which include health care and education.

Would the minister tell the House what the government is doing to maintain this theme of prudent fiscal management while protecting our vital health care services?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I want to thank the member from Pickering-Scarborough East for the question. I want to reiterate that before the global recession hit, this government had a proven fiscal track record. We eliminated the inherited \$5.5-billion deficit and we delivered three balanced budgets.

But during the tougher economic times, instead of cutting services, this government is finding and eliminating inefficiency, and we're reinvesting the savings back into health care. For example, we're reducing funding for executive offices in major government agencies by 10% permanently over the next two years, and we're reinvesting that money right back into front-line care. This speaks to our plan to improve productivity and efficiency.

We have established the Drummond commission to look for better, more efficient ways to deliver services—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: We know that health care is truly one of the pillars of Ontario's public services and something the people in this province depend on. When the global recession hit, Ontarians were concerned there would be a reduction in health care services, but this government stood up and defended health care even in the face of bad economic times.

Can the minister please remind this House about what this government is doing to help hospitals during these very tough economic times?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Again, I thank the honourable member for the question. I'm very proud to report that we've been able to increase funding for Ontario's hospitals, just like we have every year since 2003, even in this tough economy. We had tough choices to make, we made them, and we are protecting the gains in health care.

In this coming fiscal year, the hospital sector will see an approximately 4.5% increase in funding. This includes a 1.5% increase in the overall base funding formula to meet service requirements of hospitals, an increase that the Ontario Hospital Association has applauded.

I'm equally proud to report that this government has not only made significant investments in health care since 2003, but we've decreased wait times and helped over a million Ontarians find a family doctor. Our results speak for themselves. This government continues to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Last week, I asked you a second question on the commercial fill operation under way on Morgans Road in my riding of Durham. This is similar to the operation on Lakeridge by Earthworx, which you'd be familiar with. This fill permit was issued by the Ganaraska Conservation Authority in June 2010.

Minister, instead of answering or responding to my question with concerns, you dismissed my constituents' concerns. In fact, Minister, you stated you are "all over this issue."

Minister, this is simply not the fact. The fill operation on Morgans Road has not had a visit from the Minister of the Environment or a director's order on it whatsoever. It's being led by the municipality, and the conservation authority is making arrangements to test the soil.

Minister, are you even aware of what's happening at the Earthworx operation on Morgans Road?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my friend for bringing this matter to my attention. In last week's question, of course, he was talking about Earthworx. I can tell you, and I was clear, that my ministry actually issued an order on Earthworx October 25 of last year to

prevent them from accepting dirty fill. I'm glad to report to the House that Earthworx is now in complete compliance with the orders that we have placed on them. I think that is important.

But when it comes to the issue of Morgans Road, I'd like to say to the member that I appreciate the fact that he brought this to my attention. I have shared that with my deputy minister.

When it comes to issues of enforcement, of course, we have valued public servants that we appreciate on this side of the House. We have sent them to look into the issue that has been raised by the member. I appreciate it any time that the member wants to bring up any issue that has to do with his riding.

When it comes to Lakeridge, we are all over it, and I want to thank him for sharing information about Morgans Road.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: Your apology is accepted.

Minister, citizens of the area formed a working group called the Clarington Citizens for Clean Water and Soil. They're concerned about having contaminated fill put in their water table. That's it. I want to recognize Ted and Beth Meszaros, Sherry Ibbotson and Lou Speziale, who within a few days took action on the issue. In fact, they're leading the parade.

This past Saturday, they organized a rally at the dump site on Morgans Road. Our citizens are acting. The mayor and council are acting. The region is acting. Where are you on this issue? You're not to be seen.

Hon. John Wilkinson: When it comes to Lakeridge in his riding, the first member to raise it in this House was the member for Danforth. That's who actually raised it in this House first, just to make the record clear.

When it comes to the issue, I want to share with the member what exactly we have been doing because of the issues that were raised by the community in regard to Lakeridge. Well, we've put an order on them. Soil testing to date done by my ministry has shown that—none have resulted in us believing that that is hazardous.

We have taken further action. The company must increase, and has increased, its sampling of soil coming to the site, separating soil coming from different sources. We've told them they have to do weekly soil audits, and soil monitoring must be done every 25 metres.

We also have required the company only to accept soil from sites which have soil management plans reviewed by the company and overseen by our—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CHILD PROTECTION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Premier. Premier, today I will be introducing thousands of signatures sent to me from across Ontario in support of my bill, Bill 131, which would give the Ombudsman power of oversight over hospitals, school boards, long-

term-care facilities and, in particular, because they're here today, children's aid societies.

Ontario is the only province in Canada where the Ombudsman cannot investigate problems that exist in those institutions. My question is, why?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to talk about the independent CAS oversight, because we support that, because we already have that. Child welfare services already have a number of mandated independent oversights, including Family Court oversight of all child protection matters before the court; the Child and Family Services Review Board; the Ombudsman, who has oversight of the Child and Family Services Review Board; the Auditor General; and the Office of the Chief Coroner and the pediatric death review, which, again, provides independent, unbiased reports—

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a second.

We welcome guests to the chamber all the time. As much as you may want to participate in the proceedings, you need to be elected. You'll have that opportunity in October. I just ask that any gestures or anything—they just aren't appropriate to the maintenance within the chamber.

Minister, please continue.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: It was our government that took additional steps to ensure that children in our care are well protected. We increased the powers of the Child and Family Services Review Board. We established the independent Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, and that demonstrates our commitment to support a stronger and more responsive system.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Today, I was out with a group of people, and they're in the Legislature. Thirty people came today to demonstrate in front of your ministry, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, in support of Ombudsman oversight over children's aid societies. The report from the Ombudsman said that you are the only province—the only one in Canada—that doesn't have oversight over these institutions, particularly over children's aid societies. That is what the Ombudsman said.

There is no downside to having Ombudsman oversight. We and they do not understand why you and the Premier continue to refuse to give the Ombudsman that power to have oversight. We don't know why you're doing it. We don't know what the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the honourable member—he shouldn't be holding the prop up. Question?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: This is the Ombudsman's report, and it's hardly a prop.

Why is it that you refuse continually to give the Ombudsman the power to have this oversight, the power to investigate problems, the power that these people are looking for—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: As I've said, child welfare services already include a number of mandated independent oversights, including the CFSRB, the Family Court, the Ombudsman, the Auditor General and the chief coroner, just to name a few.

We've increased the powers of the CFSRB, and Ontarians can rest assured that child welfare currently has a variety of complex, independent, overlapping, rigorous, government-mandated oversights, reviews, systems and accountability. The member opposite knows that. We continue to respect the Ombudsman, we work with the Ombudsman, we do receive recommendations from his office, and we're continuing to work with him very closely.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Research and Innovation. Ontario has been home to many great innovations including the RIM BlackBerry, to which we're all—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind the honourable member that, notwithstanding the fact that it may be an Ontario-made product, as I reminded an honourable member about a prop before, I remind you as well.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you. I must exempt the member from St. Catharines from that addiction.

However, to get back to what I was saying, for Ontarians to continue to lead the way in global innovation, we must continue to support breakthrough discoveries in fields like theoretical physics that can help us exceed the capabilities of technologies that exist today. Understanding the fundamental laws of physics and applying that knowledge will help us fuel more innovation. In particular, by providing support in the field of quantum theories, we can help change the world.

How will the minister ensure that Ontario advances and expands on expertise in basic theoretical physics in order to make Ontario a world leader in innovation?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This is a rather extraordinary story. We have already put \$70 million in the Perimeter Institute and are now adding another \$50 million over the next 10 years. This is arguably the world's global leader in quantum physics, with aspirations to develop the world's first quantum computer.

Many of us on this side of the House realize that 4.5% of the innovation companies in Canada are creating 50% of the new jobs. The Premier's Open Ontario policy, which he established last year, is driving that, to the point where we are within a month of a full job recovery at a point when the US is at less than 15%. And 80% of the jobs being created are coming from this. As a matter of fact, our sister organization in Kitchener-Waterloo, Communitech, delivers one new start-up every single day—one new start-up just at Communitech alone every day. That's where—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The time for question period has ended.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Durham has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of the Environment concerning Morgans Road, Clarington, soil fill. This matter will be debated Wednesday at 6 p.m.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I want to take a moment to welcome representatives from the Canadian Diabetes Association who are here at Queen's Park. They are these folk, and perhaps some others: Siva Swaminathan, Sofia Ahmed, Denise Stanley, Stephanie Bowdrey, Wayne Guembel, Janet Guembel, Michael Ibrahim, Sue Taylor, Brian McIntosh and Sue Harris. I want to get all those names read so they'll appear in Hansard and they'll be forever remembered as having been here. Welcome, everybody.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very pleased to introduce some folks from the Canadian Cancer Society. I'd like to introduce Annette King, Andrew Noble, Donna Czukar and CEO Martin Kabat to the Legislature.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BRENT POLAND

Mr. Robert Bailey: On April 8, 2007, Corporal Brent Poland and five other members of the Royal Canadian Regiment, 2nd Battalion, based at CFB Gagetown, were killed by an IED while on a mission in Helmand province near Kandahar, Afghanistan.

Corporal Poland grew up in Camlachie, near the southern shore of Lake Huron, in my riding. Throughout his life, Corporal Poland felt an intense desire to make a difference by serving his country. In a letter home to his family, Corporal Poland wrote, "Joining the army as an infantryman is something that I needed to do."

This Saturday, April 9, Corporal Poland will be posthumously awarded the Canadian Sacrifice Medal in a special ceremony near his home in southwestern Ontario.

The Sacrifice Medal was developed to commemorate the heroic efforts of Canadian soldiers serving our country on battlefields throughout the world. The colours of the Sacrifice Medal are black, red and white. They represent grief, spilled blood and the hope for peace. On the face of the medallion is an effigy of Her Majesty, the

Queen of Canada; on the reverse, a representation of the statue "Canada," which forms part of the Vimy Memorial in France and represents a young nation forever mourning her dead.

This weekend my thoughts and prayers will be with Corporal Poland's parents, Patricia and Don, and their extended family.

I hope for the quick and safe return of all Canadian military personnel stationed around the world.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
We will remember them.

LORRAINE BADDELEY

Mr. Bob Delaney: Last Friday, after nine years as the general manager of the Streetsville BIA, Lorraine Baddeley moved to Port Dover with her husband to retire.

Lorraine's many accomplishments during nearly a decade with the Streetsville BIA include:

—the creation of the Streetsville Village Times newspaper;

—the introduction of the Litternot program to the village;

—numerous awards, including one for beautification, which won over all other BIAs in Mississauga;

—new events such as the Halloween Streetsville Spooktacular, the annual Christmas tree lighting, and a Taste of Streetsville, which showcases our top-notch restaurants in the village of Streetsville.

Perhaps Lorraine and the Streetsville BIA's most visible achievement is the transformation of the Streetsville Village Hall on Queen Street. The hall originally served as the location for the Cunninghams' tinsmithing business in the 1860s, and since then has served as the Streetsville public library, a centennial library and a traditional meeting hall. Today, thanks to the hard work of Lorraine and her BIA, the registered historical building has been completely renovated and is now the new home of the Streetsville Business Improvement Association.

Thank you, Lorraine, for having made Streetsville a wonderful place to work, to live and to raise a family. The work of Lorraine Baddeley will always beat in the heart of Streetsville.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus to recognize World Autism Day, which was marked on Saturday. Autism is a neurological disorder that affects the functioning of the brain.

While many children sit on wait-lists for funding to treat autism, some families are forced to pay \$60,000 per year out of pocket for IBI therapy. I heard from Alison recently, mother of three young boys, two of whom have been diagnosed with autism, and the third is showing similar characteristics. Alison said in her email, "My children need IBI therapy, occupational therapy and

speech language pathology. I can't afford any of these. I am on wait-lists for services and respite. I've requested special services at home and am wait-listed despite the intake coordinator requesting emergency assistance for my family."

Alison's family is helping her out financially, but she pays out of pocket for private IBI for one of her children and says, "With two children with autism, it is a choice no parent should ever have to make ... which of my children will I give therapy to?"

Autism Ontario, in their response to last week's Liberal budget, said, "It is still not likely that we are going to see significant improvement in the currently unacceptable situations of service wait-lists."

I ask the McGuinty Liberals to stand up today for families like Alison's and many others across Ontario and acknowledge the difficult choices they have to make because of your inaction to provide them the services and supports they need.

YOUTH EXCHANGES

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: It's my great pleasure to talk about an organization in my riding of Ottawa Centre. The Society for Educational Visits and Exchanges in Canada, or SEVEC, is a distinctly Canadian program that enriches young people's lives by giving them hands-on experience with other youth in communities across the country.

Each year 5,000 Canadian youth travel free of cost to another part of Canada through the Youth Exchanges Canada programming. In Ontario, more than 1,000 youth will take part in the program this year, and in turn, over 1,000 youth from other parts of Canada will visit and learn about Ontario.

These exchanges can take on many forms. For example, a group from Ottawa recently travelled more than 4,000 kilometres to Aklavik, in the Northwest Territories, to explore new places and cultures, while at-risk youth from Toronto participated in an exchange with aboriginal youth in Vancouver. By bringing young people together to chat, hang out, play and learn, the exchange programs break down barriers among youth from different parts of the country, different cultures and backgrounds and different economic situations. With travel costs free, such exchanges mean that kids from virtually all backgrounds can experience the trip of a lifetime.

This year, SEVEC is also celebrating an amazing 75 years of service, as it started in 1936 and has facilitated educational exchanges for over 350,000 Canadian youth in that time.

I want to thank them for the work they do and wish them many more successful years. I also encourage members to learn about SEVEC and how an exchange might benefit a youth in their communities, as well as the benefit from those outside Ontario visiting and getting to know us here. I will be forwarding more information about SEVEC and its program to my colleagues in the very near future.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The Ontario PC Party has raised a number of concerns about this government's energy policies and the impact they're having on Ontario families and seniors.

My constituent Helen Johnston is a senior who has chosen a green option and hangs her laundry outside to dry. Mrs. Johnston doesn't want to pay the peak rates imposed by this government on top of their HST to do her laundry.

But she has an obvious challenge since off-peak hours are 9 p.m. to 7 a.m. Mrs. Johnston needs the sun to dry her laundry, but between 9 p.m. and 7 a.m., the sun doesn't shine in Ontario. If she wants to dry her clothes on a clothesline, she has to do her laundry before 7 a.m. With all her sheets, towels and clothes, she fears she will be forced to rise by 3:30 a.m.

Mrs. Johnston is not alone. The situation is being experienced by all Ontario families and seniors. Under this government, hydro rates have increased by 100% with the so-called smart meter. Even worse for Mrs. Johnston, hydro bills are expected to rise by at least another 46% within the next five years, by the government's own admission.

The PC caucus recently released the results of their "Have Your Say, Ontario" survey. Not surprisingly, the result shows that 28% of respondents identified hydro bills as the expense they were most concerned about. And 72% blame the HST and expensive energy experiments for their skyrocketing hydro bills. That's why an Ontario PC government will deliver a long-term, pragmatic energy program for Ontario that puts consumers first.

1310

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I rise today to talk about an important event in Sudbury. On Thursday, April 7, my fellow New Democrats Glenn Thibeault, MP for Sudbury, Claude Gravelle, MP for Nickel Belt, and I will be attending the Angels in Pink second annual Pink Glove Party at the Caruso Club. The event is a fundraiser for breast cancer equipment—more particularly to purchase a breast coil for the MRI machine at Sudbury Regional Hospital. I want to congratulate Beverly Brisco and all those brave women, the Angels in Pink, for their fundraising efforts. With their hard work, I know we will succeed.

I also want to draw attention to a disturbing trend: Accessibility to high-tech medical equipment in Ontario is not based on people's needs; instead it is based on a hospital's ability to fundraise. I think this is wrong. The allocation of provincial resources such as a PET scanner or breast MRI should be planned and rolled out in respect of medicare; that is, based on people's needs, not their ability to pay or fundraise.

I have no problem with community participation, but when Sudbury Regional Hospital's website tells us that

they presently care for 170 ALC patients and there are 19 people in the emergency room waiting for a bed as we speak, one can see how those issues become all-consuming.

It is time for the Minister of Health to take a serious look at the geographic distribution of high-tech medical equipment and its effect on access to care for everyone in Ontario, including people in the northeast.

DIABETES

Mr. Ted McMeekin: It's my pleasure today to welcome members of the Canadian Diabetes Association, who are here at Queen's Park to update us on the status of diabetes in Ontario. Having stood in this House many times to discuss diabetes, I'm proud of what our government has been able to do to fight diabetes in this province and to enhance the lives of those with this disease. Legislation passed to provide insulin pumps for juvenile diabetics has been very helpful, but we all know there is so very much more to do.

The Canadian Diabetes Association predicts that the number of diabetics in this province will increase from 1.169 million Ontarians in 2010 to 1.903 million in 2020. This means the costs for treating this disease will increase as well. Last week many of us, myself included, spoke to MPP Mangat's bill to make November Diabetes Awareness Month as part of the strategy to promote diabetes prevention, treatment and education, because people need the tools to recognize the symptoms of diabetes and learn how best to treat their illness.

Today, thanks to the wonderful work of the Canadian Diabetes Association, we have an Ontario diabetes strategy that sets targets and tracks our progress in the fight against diabetes. Everyone who has this disease needs to have access to the best possible care, and everyone who is at risk needs to know that they can lower their risk with a healthier lifestyle. Surely, by working with the Canadian Diabetes Association and other diabetes-focused organizations, we can do that.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: The economy is improving and Ontario is turning the corner, thanks to the sound management of the McGuinty government. The 2011 budget makes affordable, strategic investments in health care and education and renews our focus on eliminating the deficit without drastic cuts.

Since coming into government, we have worked hard to rebuild the schools, hospitals, roads and bridges that were neglected by the previous government. During the global economic downturn, we made investments to create and preserve jobs while also protecting health care, education and other core services. We modernized Ontario's tax system so that businesses can compete more effectively in the global economy. We introduced full-day kindergarten to give our kids the best possible start. We increased the number of students in college and university to ensure that Ontario has the best-educated workforce in the world.

The Leader of the Opposition has stood against every one of these initiatives. He's against cutting taxes for families and business. He's against creating 600,000 new jobs across the province.

He refuses to share his plan, because he knows Ontario families won't support laying off teachers, closing hospitals and laying off nurses. Ontario families don't want to see these kinds of cuts again. They want to see health care and education protected, and the McGuinty government will continue to move forward in a responsible way.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: The McGuinty government is committed to making the investments that are necessary to position Ontario as a global economic leader.

Our government also recognizes that education will be a key factor that determines which economies thrive in the highly competitive post-recession world. To build a skilled workforce, we have to ensure that post-secondary education is available to all Ontarians. That's why I was so proud to see, in last week's budget, committed funding to allow 60,000 more students to attend post-secondary institutions in this province. There will be room for every qualified Ontario student in this plan.

Over eight years, the McGuinty government has made a clear commitment to education at all levels; 200,000 more students are now learning in Ontario than in 2002-03. In that time, our province's post-secondary attainment rate has risen from 56% to 64%. That's higher than any other OECD country. With this new commitment, the McGuinty government will raise that rate to 70%.

Together we're building a stronger future for a stronger Ontario as our province turns the corner in its economic recovery. Together we're helping families build a better future for their children, for the people of Oakville and for the people of Ontario.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SMOKE-FREE ONTARIO AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI FAVORISANT UN ONTARIO SANS FUMÉE

Mme Gelinis moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 176, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act in respect of certain tobacco products / Projet de loi 176, Loi modifiant la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée en ce qui concerne certains produits du tabac.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to introduce this bill. It being Daffodil Month and Cancer Awareness Month, I thought it would be appropriate.

This act is very simple and proactive. The act says that no person shall sell or distribute flavoured tobacco products, whether it be new tobacco products or smokeless tobacco products. As more and more youth in Ontario are being targeted by flavoured tobacco products and becoming addicted to nicotine, this act aims to prevent the next generation from becoming addicted to nicotine and curb the rise in cancer rates across Ontario.

PUBLIC SECTOR
SALARY DISCLOSURE
AMENDMENT ACT, 2011
LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA DIVULGATION
DES TRAITEMENTS
DANS LE SECTEUR PUBLIC

Ms. Horwath moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 177, An Act to amend the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, 1996 with respect to disclosure of severance payments / Projet de loi 177, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur la divulgation des traitements dans le secteur public à l'égard de la divulgation des indemnités de cessation d'emploi.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Currently the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, 1996, requires public sector employers to disclose the salary and benefits of employees paid a salary of \$100,000 or more in a year. The bill amends the act to require public sector employers to disclose the salary, benefits and severance payments paid to employees if the total of those amounts is \$100,000 or more in a year. The bill also requires public sector employers to promptly disclose severance payments more than \$100,000. A definition of "severance payment" is provided.

1320

MOTIONS

SELECT COMMITTEE
ON THE PROPOSED TRANSACTION
OF THE TMX GROUP
AND THE LONDON STOCK
EXCHANGE GROUP

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the meeting times for the Select Committee on the proposed

transaction of the TMX Group and the London Stock Exchange Group.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, notwithstanding the order of the House dated February 23, 2011, the Select Committee on the proposed transaction of the TMX Group and the London Stock Exchange Group be authorized to present its final report to the Legislature no later than April 21, 2011.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

DAFFODIL MONTH MOIS DE LA JONQUILLE

Hon. Deborah Matthews: April is the Canadian Cancer Society's Daffodil Month, and I'm pleased to show my support for the fight against cancer by wearing the society's iconic daffodil.

I'm also pleased to welcome members of the Canadian Cancer Society, including Martin Kabat, the CEO of the Canadian Cancer Society in Ontario, to the Legislature today. Mr. Kabat heads the Ontario division of an extraordinary organization that has been making a difference in the lives of Canadians since 1938.

Their mission is impressive. The Canadian Cancer Society is a national community-based organization of volunteers whose mission is the eradication of cancer and the enhancement of the quality of life of people living with cancer.

Cancer has touched the lives of many of us here in the Legislature and right across our great province. It takes the lives of more Canadians than heart disease, stroke, respiratory disease, pneumonia, diabetes, liver disease and HIV/AIDS combined. In Ontario, 65,100 people were diagnosed with cancer in 2010, and sadly, 28,200 died from the disease.

With 65,000 volunteers in Ontario, the Canadian Cancer Society's presence is felt right around the province. Many of us have supported and participated in their activities in our ridings, as well as the MPP education days here at Queen's Park.

Every April for Daffodil Month, volunteers across Ontario raise funds for the society by selling these bright yellow daffodils and by knocking on doors in their communities to collect donations. Money raised during Daffodil Month helps the Canadian Cancer Society fight back by working to prevent cancer, funding research to outsmart cancer and empowering, informing, supporting and improving the lives of Canadians with cancer.

Through the dedicated efforts of volunteers and the support of generous donors, the society has been a leader in funding cancer-fighting research for more than 60

years, providing more than \$1 billion in research funding throughout its history.

Thanks to progress in cancer research, 62% of those diagnosed with cancer now survive, compared with only 25% when the society began funding research in the 1940s.

Clinical trials funded by the Canadian Cancer Society have led to some of the most important advances in cancer-fighting treatment and continue to save lives of patients here in Ontario and right around the world.

The cancer society helps cancer patients get to their treatment and cancer-care-related appointments. It provides peer support to cancer patients and loved ones caring for someone with cancer, a service that helps people be more hopeful, reduces anxiety and helps patients and caregivers have a better understanding of what to expect in their cancer journey.

The cancer society answers cancer-related questions through their cancer information service. This service is free, and help is available in more than 100 different languages.

The government of Ontario has been pleased to partner with the society in a number of areas, including the Smokers' Helpline and the Driven to Quit Challenge programs, which help Ontarians quit smoking and stop using tobacco products.

In addition, the society's work to create awareness of our provincial breast cancer and colorectal cancer screening programs is sincerely appreciated.

The government is proud to have passed the Smoke-Free Ontario Act at the urging of the Canadian Cancer Society volunteers and staff. The act has provided Ontarians with protection from the harmful health effects of second-hand smoke for almost five years now.

For Daffodil Month 2011, the society has introduced a new daffodil pin that is both an attractive and inspiring way for people to show cancer patients and their families that they are not alone in their fight.

Let me read members something from the Canadian Cancer Society's fightback.ca website: "To some, the daffodil is just a flower. To us, it's a symbol of strength and courage. A symbol of life. It says we will not give up. It says we will fight back. It says we will beat cancer."

In celebration of Daffodil Month, I would like to recognize and thank the Canadian Cancer Society and its dedicated volunteers for all they do.

I encourage all Ontarians to show your support for someone living with cancer. Make a donation and proudly wear a Canadian Cancer Society daffodil pin in April.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am pleased to rise today on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus in recognition of the month of April as Canadian Cancer Society Daffodil Month.

First and foremost, I would like to commend the Canadian Cancer Society for the important work they do to support those who have been diagnosed with cancer as well as their loved ones. I would also like to thank Mr.

Kabat and the society volunteers in Ontario who have joined us today.

The Canadian Cancer Society assists cancer patients and survivors in many different and important ways, from research to fundraising, advocacy, support, right down to having a sympathetic ear to listen or to provide assistance with rides to or from treatment and appointments.

The daffodil is an important symbol of strength, courage and even of life itself. As the society's website fightback.ca notes, "It says we will not give up. It says we will fight back. It says we will beat cancer."

Daffodil Days ran from March 31 to April 3 this year. Bunches of daffodils were made available across the country at various community events, venues and even in some workplaces. For the entire month of April, Canadian Cancer Society volunteers will be selling the daffodil pins by donation, and many individuals will be canvassing their neighbourhoods for donations.

In my own neighbourhood in Whitby, the same gentleman has been our cancer society volunteer for over 20 years. That is true dedication.

Many people will not be aware that the origin of Daffodil Days in Canada began right here in Ontario. In the 1950s, a group of Canadian Cancer Society volunteers organized a cancer fundraising tea and decided to decorate the table with daffodils. These events soon became known as daffodil teas. One society volunteer who also worked at Eaton's thought it would be a good idea to have Lady Eaton host one of these teas. It was hugely successful, with approximately 700 women in attendance.

Another volunteer convinced restaurants to donate a portion of their sales on the opening day of the cancer society residential canvass in 1956. Volunteers were on hand in the restaurants to provide patrons with daffodils as they left. The sight of daffodils all over Ontario during this canvass was intriguing to many. Society volunteers even found that those offered daffodils would often try to pay or make further donations, and the society soon realized this would be a fantastic income generator for their cause.

The following year they sold daffodils on the streets of Toronto, and this was an instant success, raising \$1,200 in its first year.

Last year, daffodil sales generated \$2.8 million in Ontario alone.

The Canadian Cancer Society has supported individuals living with cancer and their families with dedicated, compassionate service for over 50 years.

On behalf of the PC caucus, I hope that the society and its wonderful volunteers will accept our sincere thanks for the wonderful work that you do each and every day in our communities.

M^{me} France G  linas: It is my pleasure to rise in the House today in honour of the Canadian Cancer Society and Daffodil Month. This day is in honour of the Canadian Cancer Society, their staff, their volunteers. It is a day to acknowledge the hard work done by Ontarians in

every community in this province who are fighting to end cancer.

We need everyone on board for this important fight, and we need to attack the blight of cancer from all angles. We need to work together to ensure prevention, to reverse the truly disturbing rise of cancer across our communities, and we need to ensure that every Ontarian has access to equity of medical services if they do fall sick.

1330 The Canadian Cancer Society offers us a vision for moving forward on both of these goals: prevention and treatment. It is their solutions which inspire so many of us MPPs to take action, and I thank you. There is so much more to be done, and we, as politicians, must step up to the plate and be the partner that groups like the Canadian Cancer Society require.

The NDP is proud to have worked closely with the cancer society on many different initiatives. In partnership with the Canadian Cancer Society, the MPP from Brant and I successfully passed a private member's bill that banned the sale of individually sold candy-flavoured cigarillos. That was a big victory. Unfortunately, as we close loopholes, the tobacco industry works relentlessly and finds ways to get around them. That is why today I introduced a new private member's bill that will finally close the door to all flavoured tobacco products, whether it is tobacco or smokeless tobacco products.

I am proud of the work that I have done with the Canadian Cancer Society and activists in my community and across Ontario in pushing for a ban on artificial tanning among our children. We know that melanoma is one of the fastest-growing cancers among young people, that it is one of the deadliest forms of cancer, and that artificial tanning is directly linked to skin cancer. The private member's bill, the Skin Cancer Prevention Act, that I introduced with the member from London-Fanshawe could protect the health of our children, but for some reason the government is happy to drag their feet on this issue, leaving the health of our children at risk.

I am very concerned about the failure of the Ministry of Health Promotion to take action to move forward on issues of vital importance. If we are going to get serious about reversing the rise in cancer rates—and we all know that 80% of cancers could be prevented; it's worth repeating: 80% of cancers could be prevented—we will need to see a change from the Ministry of Health Promotion. Right now, we have a patchwork of services and policies, and there's no reason for this.

Ontario was one of the first provinces to put in a Ministry of Health Promotion. We are lucky to have such a ministry, and it is the ministry that should be responsible for coordinating health promotion efforts and be courageous enough to lead health promotion efforts across this province. Instead, today this ministry seems to be missing in action. It is missing the basic tenets of health promotion and is happy to allow, frankly, industries to run the show. This needs to end in order to protect the health of Ontarians and to be the partner that the Canadian Cancer Society and activists require.

Today is a day for acknowledging hard-working groups, like the Canadian Cancer Society, and the thousands of volunteers across this province, and it is a day for us, politicians, to commit ourselves to being the partner that these groups and these individuals need in making the necessary change happen.

Il me fait plaisir de souligner le mois d'avril comme le Mois de la jonquille de la Société canadienne du cancer. J'ai expliqué que mon projet de loi par rapport aux cigarillos a passé, mais malheureusement, l'industrie du tabac a développé d'autres techniques pour aller rejoindre les jeunes.

C'est pourquoi aujourd'hui j'ai déposé un nouveau projet de loi qui interdirait tous les produits du tabac aromatisé, que ce soit le tabac avec ou sans fumée.

J'ai également un projet de loi pour prévenir les jeunes d'utiliser des salons de bronzage, étant donné qu'on voit une augmentation des cancers de la peau, surtout pour les mélanomes.

Je suis très heureuse de voir que des bénévoles de partout sont venus aujourd'hui pour appuyer la Société canadienne du cancer, et j'espère qu'ensemble, on pourra prévenir le cancer.

PETITIONS

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: This is a petition calling on the Ministry of Transportation to install traffic lights at the intersection of Highway 12 and Fairgrounds Road in Orillia.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the intersection of Highway 12 at Fairgrounds Road in Orillia is a main traffic link for Notre Dame Catholic School, for the Odas Park fairgrounds and a number of local businesses; and

"Whereas we are concerned about the increased congestion and safety of the travelling public and the transportation of children to Notre Dame Catholic School;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to have the Ministry of Transportation install traffic lights at the intersection of Highway 12 and Fairgrounds Road, Orillia."

I'm in favour of this and give it to Riley to present to the table.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I've got a couple of thousand petitions here around the whole issue of Ombudsman oversight.

"Whereas the Ontario Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, is not allowed to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints in the areas of hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children's aid societies and retirement homes; and

"Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not allowing their Ombudsman to investigate any of these areas; and

"Whereas people wronged by these institutions are left feeling helpless and most have nowhere else to turn for help to correct systemic issues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Grant the Ombudsman the power to investigate hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children's aid societies and retirement homes."

I am fully supportive, and I'll be signing this petition.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to present this petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of my seatmate, the hard-working member for Niagara Falls. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the people of the province of Ontario deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and their grandparents, as requested in Bill 22, put forward by MPP Kim Craiton; and

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents"—and there are a number of other specific subsections;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

It's signed by a number of people, mostly from Niagara Falls and the Niagara area. I'm pleased to affix my signature to it and to ask page Logan to carry it for me.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and a duty to protect" the sensitive areas of the greenbelt and "the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier government to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permit process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries; and

"Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabili-

tate or fill abandoned pits and quarries"—the concern here is contaminated fill;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions" to protect our water and "to prevent contamination of the Oak Ridges moraine," specifically at Lakeridge Road and Morgans Road in Durham, my riding.

I'm pleased to sign and support it and to present it to Jimmy, one of the pages here, in his last week.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt:

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service ... ; and

"Whereas," since October 2009, insured PET scans are being performed "in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it, and ask the page to bring it to the Clerk.

1340

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas all Ontarians have the right to a safe home environment; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario works to reduce all barriers in place that prevent victims of domestic violence from fleeing abusive situations; and

"Whereas the Residential Tenancies Act does not take into consideration the special circumstances facing a tenant who is suffering from abuse; and

"Whereas those that live in fear for their personal safety and that of their children should not be financially penalized for the early termination of their residential leases;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Bill 53, the Escaping Domestic Violence Act, 2010, be adopted so that victims of domestic violence be afforded a mechanism for the early termination of their lease to allow them to leave an abusive relationship and find a safe place for themselves and their children to call home."

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition, affix my signature and send it to the table via page Fatemah.

PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas supported-living residents in southwestern and eastern Ontario were subjected to picketing outside their homes during labour strikes in 2007 and 2009; and

"Whereas residents and neighbours had to endure megaphones, picket lines, portable bathrooms and shining lights at all hours of the day and night on their streets; and

"Whereas individuals with intellectual disabilities and organizations who support them fought for years to break down barriers and live in inclusive communities; and

"Whereas Bill 83 passed second reading in the Ontario Legislature on October 28, 2010;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government quickly schedule hearings for Sylvia Jones's Bill 83, the Protecting Vulnerable People Against Picketing Act, to allow for public hearings."

I obviously support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Emma to take to the table.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'ai une pétition des gens de Sudbury.

« Attendu que la mission du commissaire aux services en français est de veiller à ce que la population reçoive en français des services de qualité du gouvernement de l'Ontario et de surveiller l'application de la Loi sur les services en français;

« Attendu que le commissaire a le mandat de mener des enquêtes indépendantes selon la Loi sur les services en français;

« Attendu que contrairement au vérificateur général, à l'ombudsman, au commissaire à l'environnement et au commissaire à l'intégrité qui, eux, relèvent de l'Assemblée législative, le commissaire aux services en français relève de la ministre déléguée aux services en français;

« Nous, soussignés, demandons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario de changer les pouvoirs du commissaire aux services en français afin qu'il relève directement de l'Assemblée législative. »

J'appuie cette pétition et je demande à Kiruthika to bring it to the Clerk.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in serving Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the table with page Jia Jia.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt.

"Whereas the Ontario Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, is not allowed to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints in the areas of hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children's aid societies and retirement homes; and

"Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not allowing their Ombudsman to investigate any of these areas; and

"Whereas people wronged by these institutions are left feeling helpless and most have nowhere else to turn to help to correct systemic issues;

"We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario" to:

"Grant the Ombudsman the power to investigate hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children's aid societies and retirement homes."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Jimmy to bring it to the Clerk.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to read another petition on behalf of my seatmate, the member for Niagara Falls. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the people of Ontario deserve and have a right to request that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care pay for the diagnostics required to identify and treat chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency for those MS patients plagued by this debilitating disease; and

"Whereas the diagnostics consisting of an MRI scan or Doppler image to be used to confirm constriction of the veins in the neck, and then, if warranted, the angioplasty procedure to dilate the veins in question. Currently, angioplasty is not an option for MS patients; and

"Whereas it should be the choice of the MS patient, on advice of his or her physician, to have the procedure done in Ontario...."

It goes through a number of other technical clauses and concludes:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To provide funding to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to cover the costs of the MRI scan or Doppler image and the subsequent angioplasty, if necessary, for MS patients."

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this document and to ask page Jia Jia to carry it for me.

TAXATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this very short petition from the people of Nickel Belt:

"Be it resolved that Dalton McGuinty immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Grace to bring it to the Clerk.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present more petitions from my riding on the issue of dumping contaminated fill on the Oak Ridges moraine. It reads as follows:

"Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and" indeed "a duty to protect the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier government to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permit process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries; and

"Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment initiate a moratorium" immediately "on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine" and other sensitive areas "until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to prevent contamination of the Oak Ridges moraine" on Lakeridge Road and Morgans Road, specifically.

I ask this in good spirit and present it to Rafeh, one of the pages, on their second-last week.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the people of the province of Ontario deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and

their grandparents, as requested in Bill 22, put forward by MPP Kim Craitor; and

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents...."

Speaker, there are a number of technical "whereas" paragraphs, and it goes on to read:

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

I agree with this, will sign it and give it to page Daniel to take to the table.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Durham.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr. John O'Toole: With your attention, I'll finally get to the bottom of the chest of these petitions, here.

"Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and" indeed "a duty to protect the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier government to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permit process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries; and

"Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill ... pits and quarries;

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"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to prevent contamination of the Oak Ridges moraine," and the greenbelt, specifically at Lakeridge Road and Morgans Road in Durham.

I'm pleased to sign it, support it and present it to Riley, one of the most effective pages here at Queen's Park.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2011 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 31, 2011, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's my pleasure today to rise on behalf of the Minister of Finance to join in the budget motion debate.

Ontario is definitely turning a corner to a better tomorrow. Jobs and growth are coming back. The economy is improving, and strategic investments in education and health care are laying the foundation for a future with increased productivity and, of course, a better quality of life for the people of Ontario.

This government has a realistic, achievable plan, and it's a plan to secure the province's long-term financial sustainability. We're determined to protect front-line services in Ontario. We believe that a strong economy that creates and protects jobs is essential to fulfilling that commitment.

Our Open Ontario plan to make the province stronger and more competitive is working. As the economy is getting better, the government is renewing its focus in a number of key areas: eliminating the deficit, reforming the delivery of our public services, protecting the gains we've made in education and in health care, and making life just a little bit easier for the people of Ontario. The McGuinty government is supporting the province's economic recovery and ensuring the lasting prosperity of our province.

Ontario's success depends on economic growth. It depends on job creation and it depends on strong education and health care systems. The Better Tomorrow for Ontario Act, we'll see, will build on the progress that we've made.

This province's greatest strength is its people. It's their talent, it's their drive, it's their relentless determination to succeed that makes Ontario so strong. Together, we're committed to making Ontario stronger. We have a realistic and responsible plan to overcome the challenges that we face. We're building on our government's plan to return Ontario finances to balance while at the same time protecting the gains that we've made.

In terms of jobs and growth, the global recession hit Ontario very hard. It hurt our families and it hit our jobs, our income, our savings and our sense of confidence. It left us shaken, feeling a little bit of uncertainty about what the future may hold for us. But we fought back. The government put together a responsible plan to strengthen our economy, to create jobs, to protect public services and to protect the things that matter most to the people of Ontario, including our education and our health care systems.

Jobs in Ontario are coming back at a faster rate than in other jurisdictions around the world. Employment, which is always a key economic indicator, is near pre-recession levels. According to Statistics Canada, almost 233,000 new net jobs have been created from May 2009 to February 2011. That means that we have recovered 91% of the jobs lost during the economic downturn. To put things into perspective, the United Kingdom has recovered less than 45% of the jobs lost during the recession and the United States has recovered only 17%. Again, I reiterate that Ontario has recovered 91% of the jobs lost. Statistics Canada also tells us that 84% of those jobs created have been full-time jobs, and in addition, the unemployment rate in Ontario has recently fallen to 8% from 9.4% at the

height of the recession. That's progress, and our plan is working.

In our first five years as a government, we worked with Ontarians to repair and rebuild the province's neglected schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, roads and bridges. Our government also eliminated the \$5.5-billion deficit we inherited, and we delivered three balanced budgets.

Then came the economic downturn. The recession not only hit our families but our businesses and our government. However, we did not cut people loose or resort to arbitrary across-the-board cuts. Instead, we ran a deficit to stimulate the economy and protect front-line services that Ontario families rely on.

Several governments around the world ran deficits to weather the storm and kick-start their economies. Here in Ontario, we invested in infrastructure, we created and protected hundreds of thousands of jobs, and we took steps to make our economy more competitive. In 2010-11, the Ontario economy is turning the corner after the global recession and, of course, is now poised for a period of sustained economic growth. The government's continued approach to prudent fiscal performance provides a solid foundation for supporting the economic recovery and ensuring long-term prosperity for the province of Ontario.

This year's deficit is projected to be \$16.7 billion, which is \$3 billion lower than outlined in the 2010 budget. The balanced pace of deficit reduction ensures the province will overcome the fiscal challenges it faces and do so through realistic and fiscally responsible measures.

Ontario's real GDP grew by an estimated 2.8% in 2010 and is near pre-recession levels. It's an indicator that Ontario's economy is turning the corner. The province's modest but solid pace of growth reflects a fundamentally sound domestic economy and continued increases in global demand for Ontario's exports.

Our government has a strong track record of fiscal prudence and discipline. We've overachieved our budget targets in five of the last seven fiscal years. The expenditure management measures introduced in the 2010 budget have produced immediate dividends, with the 2010-11 total expense projected to be \$2.6 billion lower than forecast just one year ago. This is the second year for which the government is expecting a decrease in total expense.

We continue to look for ways to deliver services more efficiently and more effectively. We're making the government more streamlined and responsive to the needs of the people.

The McGuinty government will continue to invest in the people of Ontario. We have cut personal income taxes. We have introduced a wide variety of tax credits and benefits that give money back to the people. We've introduced several tax cuts and other benefits to make life a little bit easier for the people of Ontario, such as the Ontario clean energy benefit, the northern Ontario energy tax credit, the children's activity tax credit, the Ontario

energy and property tax credit, the Ontario senior homeowners' property tax grant, the Ontario sales tax credit and, of course, the Ontario child benefit. With the changes we've made, approximately two thirds of households—those with incomes of \$90,000 or less—have more money in their pockets.

Our plan for the economy is all about giving Ontario families and businesses what they need to be successful. Regarding a business-friendly Ontario, the McGuinty government's plan continues to encourage an environment for job creation. We will continue to partner with businesses and protect job growth.

Over the next several weeks, Ontario and private sector partners will be announcing new investments of more than \$1.3 billion, including nearly \$175 million from the province, creating and retaining nearly 10,000 jobs. We're building a climate for investment in Ontario. We're creating an environment where businesses can thrive, innovate and be competitive in a global economy. We've introduced the HST, and we've reduced corporate tax rates, which are making Ontario businesses more competitive and, of course, strengthening business investment.

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AGS Automotive Systems had this to say: "The recent tax measures put in place by the Ontario government have significantly benefited our business in terms of helping manufacturing companies become more competitive in the global marketplace."

In the same vein, the Chemistry Industry Association of Canada states, "The HST is crucial to both the short-term recovery and the long-term prosperity of Ontario's manufacturing sector."

At the same time, a recent report by Michael Smart, Canada's leading economic expert on the impacts of sales tax harmonization, found that within six months after the HST was implemented, businesses had already passed on about two thirds of their savings from the HST through lower consumer prices. Also, a report by Jack Mintz, a University of Calgary economist, indicates that our tax reforms will ensure that we can, in fact, compete successfully in a global economy and will help create nearly 600,000 net new jobs in Ontario by 2020.

The McGuinty government wants Ontario to be the place where workers build innovative products and services, and the world wants to be here. This is how we choose to compete in the global economy: best workers, cutting edge products and services, putting Ontario on the map as an attractive place for businesses to invest. That's where the opportunity is, and that's where we enthusiastically embrace it.

The quality of education is on the rise and continues to be on the rise in Ontario. Ontario's economic success depends on a well-educated workforce that can compete in a global economy. When it comes to the global economy, it's not only about how well you're doing today; it's about how well you're going to do in the future. As US President Obama stated, "Those places that out-educate us today are going to out-compete us tomorrow." We've known that for a long time right here in Ontario.

Since 2003, the government has made significant investments in education that have yielded measurable results in terms of improved literacy, improved numeracy, improved test scores, lower primary class sizes and higher graduation rates. This year, we're announcing funding to help support more than 60,000 additional students in colleges and universities by 2015-16. We're proud of a plan that sees more students benefit from world-class post-secondary education. We support raising Ontario's post-secondary education attainment rate to 70%, which is up from 56% in 2002.

That's actually a very high standard relative to other OECD countries. Our students right here in Ontario are among the best in the world. Pedagogical assessments by, for instance, the Programme for International Student Assessment and the OECD have reported and proven that. In addition, McKinsey and Company in its report entitled *How the World's Most Improved School Systems Keep Getting Better* identifies Ontario as a global leader in this area. These important measures of success indicate that we're grooming a highly skilled, highly educated workforce right here in Ontario.

There's another important initiative, of course, and that's full-day kindergarten. We've known for a long time that a strong start in school makes for a strong finish. Full-day kindergarten is a key part of the government's plan to help Ontario's children get the best possible start and to help our busy parents save time and money. The initiative, as we know, is the first of its kind in North America, and we're proud of our role and proud to be a leader in this area.

From kindergarten to graduate school, the McGuinty government has chosen to strengthen our publicly funded education system because we believe building education is more than sound social policy; it's essential economic policy.

We need more than a smart workforce, of course. We need a healthy workforce, and a healthy workforce, as we know, is a productive workforce. Since 2003, the McGuinty government has taken significant steps to strengthen Ontario's public health care system. We have focused on rebuilding and transforming the public health care system to give Ontarians better access to primary care and shorter wait times, while promoting health and preventing illness.

According to the Fraser Institute's 2010 report entitled *Waiting Your Turn: Wait Times for Health Care in Canada*, patients in Ontario experience the shortest wait—that is, 14 weeks from general practitioner referral to elective treatment for surgical and other therapeutic treatments—in Canada.

That's just one example of how we're transforming our health care system for the better. Our government is also managing health care costs through investments in efficiencies, investments in cost prevention and more integrated local health services, through other initiatives such as the Ontario drug strategy and, of course, the electronic health records.

According to Mr. Greg A. Reed, who is president and CEO of eHealth Ontario, the organization is "on track,

rolling out electronic health records to meet the government's commitment to provide them for all Ontarians by 2015." Once again, that's great progress.

Our work is not done and we're committed to doing more. In the 2011 budget, we announced additional funding over the next three years to provide approximately 90,000 more breast cancer screening exams, and we will invest in a comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy, starting with children and youth. In addition, this government is enhancing pharmacy services for Ontarians who receive drug coverage through the Ontario drug benefit program, primarily seniors and social assistance recipients. This builds on the successful MedsCheck program.

Our record in health care in the province of Ontario speaks for itself. According to a 2010 TD Economics special report entitled *Charting a Path to Sustainable Health Care in Ontario*, "Ontario's residents saw first-hand in the 1990s how severe cutbacks in health spending can drive down the quality of—and confidence in—the health care system. It ultimately took more than a decade of massive investments by the Ontario and federal governments to repair much of the damage." Indeed, the McGuinty government has rebuilt a strong public health care system in Ontario that delivers quality, evidence-based care and puts patients first.

We're announcing the extension of the current risk management program for grain and oilseed farmers. We will support cattle, hog, sheep and veal farmers by implementing the new risk management program, as well as the self-directed risk management program for the edible horticulture sector, which is fruits and vegetables.

Just as people and families do in Ontario, governments must live within their means. We will continue to protect education and health care while continuing to eliminate the deficit. We are fully aware that the status quo is not an option. In addition, the government will establish the Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Services, which will be chaired by the respected economist Don Drummond. The commission will provide advice on the fundamental reforms that would help accelerate the government's plan to eliminate the deficit while continuing to protect education and health care.

We choose to preserve and safeguard quality of life for all of the people of Ontario. The McGuinty government is improving the fundamentals: education, health care, infrastructure, electricity, tax reform. We've modernized Ontario's tax system. We've rebuilt Ontario's rundown electricity system, as well as our education and our health care systems. We've kick-started our clean energy sector and we've protected our automotive industry. That's progress. These are real results. They put Ontario on a more competitive footing. We continue to create more opportunities for families in Ontario and for businesses.

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The choices have come at a financial cost but they've also paid economic dividends for the people of Ontario and for their daily lives, both now and in the future. Our plan to help the people of Ontario through the recession

and build for the future is working. It's making a difference in the lives of the people of Ontario in the areas that matter most in their daily lives. It helps them now and it helps the future of their children's lives.

We will continue to build a stronger Ontario brick by brick.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I do appreciate the opportunity to make a few comments with respect to the speech made by the member from Kitchener-Conestoga with respect to the budget motion. I know, as the parliamentary assistant for finance, that she has had to cover a lot of territory here. I'd just like to address my comments to the health care matters, if I might.

I would like to start, first of all, by saying that I am very grateful to the government for bringing forward the commitment that they have to funding mental health and addictions programs, starting with children. This is a very good first step and I congratulate them for doing that. I know that many families across Ontario are very pleased, too. We will wait to find out how the details roll out over the next few months. But in several other areas of health care, I still do have some concerns.

The member from Kitchener-Conestoga mentioned that the wait times in Ontario are the best in Canada. Well, I guess in a couple of procedures maybe they are. If you're only talking about hips and knees, I think that there has been some progress made, but there are hundreds and hundreds of medical procedures in Ontario where we're not making significant progress and Ontario continues to languish. Don't take my word for it; look at the Canada-European health index that was contributed to by the Frontier public policy organization in Winnipeg. They compared the health jurisdictions of about 34 different countries, not including the United States, and Canada—Ontario included in that—comes very close to last in that area.

Secondly, with respect to eHealth, Ontario has a pretty dismal history in terms of developing electronic health records, with over a billion dollars spent and not much to show for it. I know that Mr. Reed and his group are doing what they can to move this thing forward, but the fact remains that under the McGuinty Liberals we are years behind where we should be in the development of ehealth records, which are so important to the health of all Ontarians, so there's still a lot more that we need to do.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My thanks to the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, the parliamentary assistant, for providing a very broad-spectrum commentary on her government's budget. But there are two things that I want to address and I will enlarge upon when I have my turn to speak at length.

One is that this budget does not address the growing and profound crisis in child care. I think that everyone in this House appreciates the expansion of all-day kindergarten. What people don't appreciate is that the funds have not been put in place to allow the daycare centres

that we badly, desperately need to actually expand and take in more children. In fact, those centres face financial crises because they don't have the capital to make the changes so that they can provide secure, proper places for small children. These centres have been in difficulty, financially, for years, and with the loss of the older children to all-day kindergarten they find that their financial foundations are under threat. Those realities come home to me in daycare after daycare as I talk to the providers in my riding. This is an issue that can't be ignored but was largely ignored in this budget.

The second thing I want to say is that the other day I had the opportunity to listen to the Minister of Finance himself at the Economic Club of Canada talk about his budget. I thought for a moment that I had gone through the looking glass because all I could hear him talking about were tax cuts for business and more tax cuts for business. That's the centre of the strategy for this government in this budget and the ones that preceded it. That is not a strategy; that is the path to the demoralization of a society.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Even as the budget delivered a deficit \$3 billion less than was expected only a year ago—\$3 billion less—among the things that this budget did is to build on Ontario's success during the past seven years in education. Our province now has children graduating at a higher and higher rate from secondary school. When we came to government in 2003, we were losing one out of every three students who wouldn't graduate secondary school. Now, nearly four out of five students are graduating from secondary school.

This budget steps up and adds to the Reaching Higher plan unveiled in 2005 that laid out \$5 billion over five years to improve post-secondary school. This budget says to Ontario, "Another 60,000 new student spaces in Ontario's colleges and universities." So it stands to reason that if you're graduating more kids successfully from your secondary schools, which are now among the top 10 in the world, right up there with traditional overachievers such as Finland and Singapore and similar jurisdictions—Ontario is one of those top 10—we've got to be able to ensure that we have the spaces for them to excel—and we do—in our colleges and in our universities and in our trade schools.

Ontario has laid out 60,000 new student spaces in our colleges and universities. There will be room for every qualified Ontario student, and a commitment that this province has made to the generation that's graduating from universities, the generation that will be replacing my generation, the retiring baby boomers to whom it will seem we all retire over the same weekend, and that is that if you've got the ability, if you've got the intellectual horsepower, lack of resources will not stop you from attending a program for which you're qualified in any college or university in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I find no fault with anything specifically that the member, the parliamentary assistant from Kitchener-Conestoga, said, because she did read the notes that were given to her almost without fault, I guess my point being that she's destined to do that because, as a parliamentary assistant, her job is to sell, at any price, this budget—I know how difficult it is for her—and I guess put a little wrapping around this thing.

I look at our local media and hear our health critic—Christine Elliott is featured prominently in this article. It says, "Health Care, Education Key Focus of Provincial Budget," which is a fairly straightforward thing. I'm not sure those are the instructions that the chief economist for the TD Bank, one of the Bay Street bankers who was referred to this morning by our leader, Tim Hudak—what instructions was he given to find some reasonable approach to the huge debt and deficit that this government is ignoring? That's the most troubling part of the budget. Everyone wants more health care, more education, more services, as the member who just remarked said. Our concern is that the current economics here, even according to Don Drummond, their blue-ribbon panel—he said, in the *Globe and Mail*, I think it was last October or November—in my remarks this afternoon, I will have those formal documents—that Premier McGuinty has a structural deficit. They're spending more than they can possibly earn. That's like somebody living in a house they can't afford. That's basically what he said. On top of that, we had John Manley, the former finance minister, say the same thing.

So, deal with what the reality is, not the numbers in the speeches they gave you—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Kitchener-Conestoga has up to two minutes to respond.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I want to thank the member from Whitby-Oshawa, the member from Toronto-Danforth—I want to recognize this member as the finance critic, and travelling the province and working together, it has been a—I guess I really can't say "a pleasure." Has it been a pleasure? No. We're doing admirable work together—the member from Mississauga-Streetsville and the member from Durham.

In the short time that I have, I wanted to reiterate this quote from the 2010 TD Economics special report entitled *Charting a Path to Sustainable Health Care in Ontario*, because this is a very interesting quote that I think sums up the big picture: "And Ontario's residents saw first-hand in the 1990s how severe cutbacks in health spending can drive down the quality of—and confidence in—the health care system. It ultimately took more than a decade of massive investments by the Ontario and federal governments to repair much of the damage."

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I guess that goes across the board. As an educator, the idea of health care and education works the same. I was teaching during Rae Days. I walked the picket line during the Mike Harris as Premier days. Seeing the devastation to education and to health care under previous governments, I think we can't stress enough the importance and

the effect of the investments the McGuinty government has made since 2003, and it continues to make the commitment to protect our public services: the commitment to education, the commitment to health care, the commitment to jobs and the economy.

Those investments are there. Those investments are keeping our children in school. They're keeping our nurses and doctors in the hospital. They're keeping our jobs and our economy working right here in Ontario, and it continues through the Open Ontario plan to keep things working. In the last minutes, I just want to commend the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Dwight Duncan, for this budget. He's landed a fine, balanced and appropriate budget.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Today we are debating the budget motion. The budget motion reads "... that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government." It's a very simple motion. Of course, being a Conservative, it would perhaps be expected that I say I don't agree with this motion.

But let's not start there. Let's look at what the budgetary policy of this government has been and where it has gotten us as a province. Perhaps we can start by looking at the revenue numbers this government has generated out of the taxpayers of Ontario.

The taxpayers of Ontario are a hardy lot. We are a wealthy province, and therefore the people who make up our province are wealthy and have deep pockets, by and large. The average person in Ontario lives at a very high standard of living when judged against people living around the world. We probably live in the 95th percentile or better of the world's population. So Ontarians, by and large, even those amongst us who don't feel as though they're rich, when measured against the world population, are very well off. Therefore they have deep pockets.

What this government has done since its election in 2003 is increase the revenue it generates through taxes by almost 60%. That's at a time when the economy of this province has grown just around 10%. So the economy of the province grew 10% and the government extracted a 60% increase in taxes over that same period, far, far and away above the growth in the economy. Perhaps that's something we should look at as to whether it's a policy.

If we go back and look at the Liberal government of David Peterson, for instance—he was first elected in 1985 and served until the year 1990—what was the budgetary policy of that government? Well, the last budget that Larry Grossman brought into this province in the spring of 1985 was \$24.4 billion. I believe that was the total budget that Larry Grossman brought in. The last budget that Bob Nixon brought in under the Peterson government was in the spring of 1990, and I believe that budget was \$48.79 billion. From \$24 billion to \$48 billion over the course of five years. So the Peterson government doubled tax revenue, taking that money out of the pockets of Ontarians.

That was the tax policy that the Liberals of David Peterson had: to take every single penny out of the

pockets of Ontario taxpayers that they thought they could get away with. They effectively doubled the taxes over his term of office.

The third party came into power on September 6, 1990, and they inherited a budget of \$48.75 billion. But taxes had risen so high that they had little room to increase income taxes; they had little room to increase fees. Basically, the only room the NDP were left with after five freewheeling years of the Liberal government, including a horrendous health tax in 1989—which at that point increased taxes about \$2.5 billion, which at that point in time was the largest tax increase in Ontario's history. The NDP took office and the only avenue they had to increase spending, which they took, was to go into deficit financing. So at the end of four and a half years, in 1995, the last budget that Bob Rae brought in was about \$57 billion; \$57 billion from \$48 billion is about an 18% increase in provincial revenue. But Bob Rae was a piker on tax increases. Even though the NDP are saddled with the opinion of the general public that they are free-wheeling and free-spending, they only increased taxes 18% in the province of Ontario, where David Peterson increased them a full 100%.

Along came a chap by the name of Mike Harris, who inherited a provincial budget of \$57 billion, and over the next eight years that budget increased to \$68 billion over eight years. That was a 9% increase, just a little over 1% a year in increased tax revenues to the province. I would argue that the province was well run from a fiscal point of view.

Then the government of Dalton McGuinty took over. He inherited a \$68-billion budget and has increased that spending by a full 60%. So it seems to me that over the last four governments that this province has had, the Liberals increased it by 100%, the NDP increased it by 18%, the Conservatives increased it by 9%, and the current Liberal government increased it by 60%. You can see a trend. When you see a trend, it really represents a policy. So what is the budget policy?

This government hasn't changed much from the Peterson days. The policy is to extract every penny that it thinks it can from the taxpayers' pockets. There are those who have said that the take-home pay of working Ontarians is really just unused tax room; we can increase taxes by the amount that these people, hard-working Ontarians, take home. That's part of the Laffer curve philosophy: that if you tax people 100%, you will get zero revenue; likewise, if you tax them 0%, you will also get zero revenue. Somewhere between the two points of taxing them not at all and taxing them to a maximum is the most efficient level of taxation—something that this government has gone far beyond.

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If we look at some of the other numbers in the budget documents, we'll see that government expenses have increased significantly along the same level as revenues have, as something you would expect, although expenses have gone up more than revenue, which is why we have a deficit.

Let's examine the deficit for a while. The deficit has risen, first, to \$24 billion and then, through some voodoo which I'll speak to later, came down to \$19 billion; now it has dropped to \$16 billion for the next fiscal year. A reducing deficit is a good thing. However, any deficit at all has an immoral side to it.

A deficit is when you borrow money from future generations of Ontario taxpayers. I've sat in this House for almost 16 years now, and I've never seen a bill go through that gives us permission to take money from future taxpayers. I've never heard from future taxpayers that they think it's okay for us to use their money.

In any other part of society, when you take money from future taxpayers or you take money from anyone in our society without their permission, it's called stealing. You, as a government, and we, as legislators, are taking money from future generations without their permission. I think that this government should give very serious consideration as to what they are doing and why. You are spending far beyond your means and you're doing it on the backs of future taxpayers. Personally, I believe there's an immoral aspect to what you're doing.

If we look at the total debt that has been accruing over the course of Ontario's history, by 2003, the total debt got to be about \$148 billion. Over the course of Confederation, since 1867, we have accumulated \$148 billion in taxes. This government, in eight years, is on line to double that debt to almost \$300 billion. By 2012, if there isn't a miracle in the balancing of the budget, which this government doesn't seem to be making an effort towards, we will in fact have doubled the debt in the eight and a half years that this government has been in place. That is a legacy that should concern everyone in this House and should be felt deeply by every member of the government. It's an irresponsible expenditure, it's an irresponsible handling of taxpayers' dollars and it's a squandering of our future. If it wasn't for low interest rates, the consequences of that would be horrendous.

I personally believe that interest rates over the next five to seven years are going to return to somewhere around the norm of 6%—about three times what you're spending now. Now we're spending \$10 billion a year in interest to service that debt. Five to seven years from now, that could be \$30 billion. Imagine what you could do, if you didn't have to service a debt, with \$30 billion—or even with \$10 billion. You could probably build ten 250-bed hospitals a year. They probably run somewhere in the order of \$800 million each. We could build new universities. We could build new roads. We could build all the things that Ontarians want if we weren't servicing that debt, a debt that this government has doubled.

I think that you want to have a serious talk to yourselves about what your legacy is, the legacy that you're leaving this House with. I, for one, think it will be remembered by the people of Ontario for a long time to come, because it's not only this government that did it; David Peterson did it as well. He doubled—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: And Mike Harris.
Interjection.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I just reviewed the numbers. For those people at home, the opposition just woke up. They're telling me that Mike Harris added to these figures. As I said in my comments, Mike Harris increased the spending of this government 9% over eight years—9%, not 100%—at a time when the economy was expanding. In those years, we expanded the economy somewhere between 16% and 20%, so the tax revenues grew half of what the economy expanded.

What has this government done? When the economy has expanded around 10% over the eight years of your governance, you have expanded government revenues by 73%, an entirely different ratio. One is sustainable; one is growth-oriented; the other is leading to disaster.

It has led us into have-not status. Of course, we're getting about \$2.5 billion from have-not status this year. Our welfare payment from the rest of Canada is \$2.5 billion. This Liberal government of Dalton McGuinty has a fancy formula, and they say, "We pay \$5 billion in and we get \$2.5 billion out. We're still paying for our own deficit." I don't think I can use the language as to what I feel about that kind of thinking; I don't believe it's parliamentary.

If you figure quickly and you don't give it much thought, those numbers will work. If you do give it any thought, if you do give it some consideration and see what would happen down the road if you extrapolate those numbers, you will find out that Ontario will get weaker and weaker every year that we continue to be a have-not province. It's a shame for the economic engine of Canada to be in that situation, and it's in that situation because almost every industry that drove this great province has had an incursion with this government and has had its problems.

The forest industry, which northern Ontario lives by and which has tremendous bonuses and attributes to southern Ontario, is an industry that truly supports all of this great province, and they've been decimated in the north. We've heard about it in debate. The NDP have been warning the government about the consequences. Many of their members come from the north and they're fully aware of the consequences of what's happening in the north.

When electrical prices increase in the pulp and paper business—they're big users of electricity—the problems are horrendous and mills close. Some 30, 40, 60, 80 mills in northern Ontario have closed. Yes, they have closed in other provinces as well, and a lot of it is because of the Canadian dollar, but there are many places that are doing much better than Ontario because they've controlled those costs that are controlled by this government—hydro costs, for instance; costs of transportation; stumpage fees; all kinds of expenses; all kinds of costs of doing business in Ontario. All of those costs have increased. This government can't point to one cost in Ontario—not one cost in Ontario—that has gone down under their term of government.

As the legacy of eight years in government, that's a very sad legacy. It's unfortunate that the economic engine of Canada has fallen on such hard times.

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In this budget, of course, there have been a number of reallocations of funds, things that will make the balance ledger look a little better, things like that they've reduced their original budget projections from \$19.7 billion down to \$16.7 billion; things like the elimination of a \$700-million planned reserve fund. We've always had a reserve fund in the Ontario budget, and by eliminating that \$700 million it reduces what the deficit looks like. It didn't reduce the deficit one penny, but it reduces what it looks like. It's a visual, a straight visual. It doesn't have any effect on the government of Ontario or their net results.

I'm saddened by this budget motion. I can't support this budget motion because of what it does to Ontario. It seems to me that the budget motion talks about the principles of finance, and the principles of finance that have been put forward by every Liberal government this province has had since the Second World War, in modern times—every single one has increased the amount of taxes, increased deficits—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: First of all, I want to thank the member from Halton for his comprehensive review of the budget and the history of budgets and deficits here in Ontario for the last 25 or 30 years.

I want to take the opportunity, though, once again to say that when people read this budget, when they assess the core of the economic strategy that has been put forward by the Minister of Finance, they will find tax cuts for corporations at the heart of it. I've had the opportunity to be on a television panel with the House leader, the member from Nipissing, who went after the Conservatives because they were offering tax cuts in their programs, talking about all of the nurses who would be laid off and all the programs that would be eliminated because of those tax cuts, and at the same time not recognizing that they were in fact engaged in cutting \$4 billion in taxes out of the revenue stream that Ontario depends on.

I find it an extraordinary process that this Liberal government, this McGuinty government, thinks that it can build an economy in Ontario by undermining the revenue of the public services that are needed to provide the roads, the schools, the hospitals, all of that infrastructure that makes a modern economy operate. That is not a strategy for building our economy; that is a strategy for keeping some very powerful backers onside, but it is not one that will in fact build Ontario.

In, I think, 1999-2000, Paul Martin, the federal finance minister, introduced the biggest tax cuts in Canadian history for corporations, and since that time, as you are well aware, we have seen an ongoing decline in manufacture in this province. That strategy doesn't work.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: The budget document, which is available free online for anyone who wants it, is really

interesting reading. For example, there's an urban myth that suggests that somehow or other bureaucracy is galloping ahead in the province of Ontario, except that like most urban myths, it's not true.

Let's just use some of the numbers out of the budget document. I'm quoting from chapter 1 of the budget. What do you think it costs per capita to run government in Ontario? It costs \$186 on average all across Canada, except in Ontario, where, if you listen to some of the naysayers, you would think that we must be higher than that. In fact, we're lower. Only one province in the entire country spends less money on governing itself than the province of Ontario. That would be—surprise—Nova Scotia. Among the provinces that spend more per capita governing themselves than the province of Ontario are Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia and Alberta. People think Alberta must be the leanest and the meanest place in the country, but in fact, in terms of what it spends to govern itself, Alberta spends more than Ontario. Of course, the high spenders are Quebec and, not surprisingly, Newfoundland and Labrador and Prince Edward Island, largely due to the economies of scale or, in this case, the reverse of them.

In fact, the size of the Ontario public service, over the seven years that our government has had the privilege of managing the province's finances, has dropped and continues to drop. Just the implementation alone of the HST has meant that Ontario can transfer 1,250 civil servants.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm really pleased to make a few comments with respect to the speech that was made by my colleague the member from Halton, who, I think, made some really important points with respect to the recent budget and this budget motion that is before us.

He devoted his time to discussing probably the biggest failure of this budget, which is the failure of the McGuinty government to control spending. Single-handedly under their watch, the debt in Ontario has doubled since they took power in 2003. Imagine all the debt that accumulated from Confederation up to 2003; that has now been doubled in eight years. It's pretty astounding to comprehend.

That means debt of over \$17,000 each for every man, woman and child in Ontario. That's serious. It's something we need to get a hold of. It affects our international reputation. It affects our international standing.

Some people say that it's a good thing that the budget didn't commit to a whole lot of new spending. Well, the fact of the matter is, there's no money to spend. Ontario's broke right now. We need to get this under control, and it's not likely that it's going to happen under this government.

Even on their own projections, they're saying that it's not likely that Ontario will be able to get out of deficit until 2017-18. That's not a plan. That is—at best—a hope, a dream, a wanting it to be. But there's no clear plan for how we're going to do that. Something comes

along every five minutes, and it'll be, "That's a good idea; let's spend some money on this."

We really need to get serious about this. This has serious repercussions for our children and our grandchildren, and if we don't do something about it now, they're not going to have any hope for the future.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Johnson: It's a pleasure to rise to join this debate this afternoon. I'd like to thank the members from Halton, Toronto–Danforth, Mississauga–Streetsville and Whitby–Oshawa.

The key point in this budget is that we will eliminate the deficit while protecting key public services and economic growth. We have a plan for doing it over a reasonable length of time. Other governments are talking about doing it over four years. We'll see how that rolls out. But the key thing here is that we are going to eliminate the deficit. We're reforming the delivery of public service. We're protecting gains that we've made in our education and health care systems. Some 91% of the jobs that were lost during the recession have been recovered.

Now, I found it interesting listening to my colleague from Halton when he talked about the Harris government, from 1995 to 2003, only increasing spending by 9%. But it was done on the backs of the education system, the health care system, social services.

Even during this time of great economic growth, they still managed, although the government of the day said that the budgets were balanced—I remember attending the famous Magna budget that was held outside this chamber, totally disrespecting our system of government when it happened. And what happened? We find out afterwards—the auditor reports back that there was a hidden \$6-billion deficit. Our government has set up the process so that this will not happen because the books will be audited at the end.

I remember 26 million school days lost during the former government's reign. I remember health care facilities closed. How many social programs were lost?

We've delivered, in this budget, a risk management program that they will vote against, and support for children's mental health that they will vote against. Sixty thousand new college spaces will be created that they will vote against, and 90,000 more breast cancer screenings will be done, and they will vote against that. They should be ashamed for doing it.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Halton has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's flabbergasting, actually, that the member for Haliburton would make those comments. They were all wrong. I don't know how he could have been at the Magna budget. There was no one there from the Liberal Party.

He talked about health care, the cuts to health care. Health care went from a \$17-billion annual budget to a \$28.5-billion annual budget. Education costs in Ontario increased exponentially under the Harris government.

There were 12,000 new nurses hired under the Harris government, something that the opposition doubts.

I want to make one comment on the member for Danforth, who talked about corporate tax cuts. I can understand it's a philosophical thing with the NDP; they don't want any corporate tax cuts. But I think you have to understand what those corporate tax cuts are. First, this government raised taxes on corporations and small businesses significantly on their election and over the first six years of their term. They raised them. If they raised them, let's say, \$1,000 per company, now they've given them \$100 back. That's not really a tax cut, is it? Not over their term. There's not one thing under their term that they can point to that costs less in Ontario rather than more. Putting the tax cut in context, it doesn't serve this government very well.

I say that my premise holds that this government is on track to double the debt of the province. They've increased the revenues by 73% when the economy only increased 9%. They have done nothing good for Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the New Democrats in this House to respond to the McGuinty government's budget that was presented last week.

The leader of our party, Andrea Horwath, had this to say when she spoke about the budget last week: that when all is said and done, this will probably be referred to as the budget that was much ado about nothing. It really is a standstill budget. Many of our needs in this province are unmet. Fundamental investments that are needed for economic growth, health, well-being and housing for the people of this province were not addressed. It was a budget that made me think there are things that are being held back for the election this fall. It will be interesting to see what plan the Liberals really do have when they bring forward their platform.

If there's one thing that is clear from this budget, it's that the McGuinty government and the Premier himself are out of touch with the pressures that are faced by recession-weary families. Ontario families are facing ongoing joblessness. Many are facing a situation where they've lost a full-time job and are now trying to make do on part-time wages or the wages from a number of part-time jobs cobbled together. They're facing soaring electricity prices related to failed nuclear policies of this government. They're facing soaring heating prices from the HST and from the failure of this government to actually push forward for energy efficiency in the natural gas sector.

We have a situation where people are finding life difficult and, clearly, this budget is not going to make it easier for them. I would say that this is a budget that continues to put the squeeze on middle-income families in Ontario. Dalton McGuinty's answer to that squeeze has been a new sales tax on people's everyday essentials and a multi-billion-dollar handout to some of Ontario's biggest and richest corporations. I don't think that's fair.

I don't think most Ontarians think that's fair, but beyond that, it also does not deliver what people need to see, and that is a healthy, sustainable economy. That is not going to come out of this budget. The McGuinty government had the opportunity with this budget to fix things, to address the issues that people are concerned with. Instead, Premier McGuinty decided to stick with the status quo. He has made extraordinary claims about the ability of corporate tax cuts to create jobs. But it's clear from the numbers in this budget that the Premier's so-called jobs strategy is not working. In fact, the whole jobs plan is in disarray. The government continues to hand over billions to corporations without any guarantee that they'll create jobs. We've been making these same criticisms for a couple of years now, so I can't say that we were surprised that the government, in this budget, in the documents, quietly reduced their job creation estimate by 75,000 jobs over the next three years. That is a very significant backing off of one's claims for the effectiveness of Dalton McGuinty's economic policies. But it was inevitable. Just doling out cash to corporations with no strings attached does not build an economy. That has been proven over and over again. But this government just doesn't seem to get it.

I was very pleased that my federal NDP leader, Jack Layton, has put together a jobs package with strings attached for any money that goes to the business sector, so that the investment of public dollars results in the jobs that people need. He has proposed incentives that reward businesses for making real investments in plant, machinery, training and jobs. If you want to have real job creation when you give money to the corporate sector, you must have strings attached. I'll return to Jack Layton's jobs package later in the speech. It's something I was very pleased to see come forward.

Of course, even though jobs are a very central part of people's concerns in Ontario, there's more in terms of their lives that they feel needs to be addressed. This government will try and hang its hat on a few items from this budget. Let's talk about a few of those.

About health care: After closing breast cancer clinics in London and forcing patients to fight for breast cancer treatments, why would anyone believe that the government all of a sudden has a breast cancer strategy? It's absurd to think that a nominal investment in breast cancer screening over three years absolves this government of anything.

Then there's education, specifically post-secondary education. Let's talk about that. When Ontario is the single most expensive province in Canada to attend university and students are carrying an average debt of \$30,000 upon graduation, why would anyone believe that this government has a plan to help families struggling with the cost of putting those kids through school? I actually think that the quote that was put forward earlier about the role of education in the future performance of economies is quite correct. Those jurisdictions that invest in education in their young people and develop a knowledge base, a skill base to actually run a sophisticated

economy, will do better in this world than others. When you continually pile debt and obligations on the backs of the young people who are taking on those skills and education, you undermine that education. You make it very difficult for people to actually take the education that they want. You put people in a position where their personal finances are a constant pressure and strain on them. That is a mistake that this government has made. That is a mistake that was not corrected in this budget.

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This government has announced solutions before, like a brand new courthouse in west end Toronto to help deal with the massive case backlog, which has now been abruptly scrapped. So why would we believe that the Premier will actually follow through on addressing the concerns that he has identified in his budget? There may be a plan somewhere out there, but part of what's put into this budget, which I think is part of that plan, concerns me a lot, and that's the part that's buried further in, deeper into the pages, something fairly murky and something that I think is a threat to the well-being of the delivery of public services in this province. It's the creep towards privatization of public service delivery.

In this budget, this government opens the door to American-style privatized public service delivery. If you read this budget, the only areas that supposedly are off limits are health and education. But even they could be defined or redefined creatively to allow for a substantial increase in privatization.

That model of privatization of services has not worked south of the border and it won't work here. If this government thinks it can parcel off the delivery of important public services to the private sector, then it will find significant opposition not just from New Democrats but from people right across the political spectrum in Ontario. This government needs to be very open about what it's doing with regard to service delivery. The people of Ontario deserve no less.

In the lead-up to the budget, New Democrats asked that the McGuinty government put people first. This government failed. They could have made life more affordable for families by taking the HST off of hydro and home heating. Instead, they put another \$400 million into a corporate tax giveaway. They could have ensured that front-line health services were there for families who need them. Instead, they're still cutting important health programs and services, announcing more than \$100 million in new cuts and refusing to put a hard cap on health CEO salaries. This government could have ensured that the concerns of families in northern Ontario would have been heard. But instead, they slashed the budgets of important ministries like natural resources and aboriginal affairs. For the McGuinty government, it's as if northern Ontario doesn't exist. That's how bad this budget was for northern Ontario.

Let's go into recent Ontario economic history a bit to look at why this budget is so inadequate. Between September 2008 and May 2009, 250,000 Ontarians lost their jobs. That's a quarter of a million jobs gone. In

2009 alone, the real gross domestic product of this province contracted 3.6%. The unemployment rate in places like Windsor and Oshawa spiked well into the double digits, and Toronto wasn't all that far behind. From retail to information technology, no sector was safe from what's now routinely called the great recession.

Although there are some signs of recovery on the horizon, economists are warning of a prolonged period of sluggish growth. Unemployment remains stubbornly high, and while other provinces have recovered to their pre-recession employment levels, at least 16,000 fewer Ontarians are working today than were working in 2008.

Meanwhile, real wages continue to stagnate. After inflation is taken into account, the average hourly wage hasn't changed since 1991. That is of consequence to the economic well-being of this province. If people can't buy goods and services, the economy can't move forward. You need to have purchasing power in the hands of the people of this province if we actually are going to have successful businesses, successful economic activity and successful government. This government has presided over the stagnation of the middle class in Ontario.

Most people are getting by with less or simply the same, but there are exceptions. For example, Canada's CEOs are doing better than at any time in our history. By 3 p.m. on January 1, they had already collected more in pay than the average person earns in a year.

Instead of addressing this inequality, government after government in Ontario has sacrificed fiscal capacity for corporate tax giveaways. From 1999 to today, successive Progressive Conservative and Liberal governments have handed out more than \$20 billion in business tax giveaways. Corporate profits increased 7.9% last quarter to \$66 billion. That's good news for CEOs, good news for shareholders, but it raises serious questions about the economic usefulness of the McGuinty government's multi-billion-dollar corporate tax giveaways.

As I said earlier, Ontario's record on post-recession job creation isn't as strong as that of other provinces, like Manitoba, for example. That province, with an NDP government, I might add, has put pause on further corporate tax giveaways while its provincial budget is in deficit. While Ontario remains 16,000 jobs below pre-recession peak, Manitoba has gained 15,000 jobs since the date the recession took hold. To get a real sense of where this corporate tax giveaway is going, it helps to look at one sector of Ontario's economy and see what they've done with the additional money.

The Ontario government's own budget says the corporate income tax cut will hand \$535 million to banks and \$135 million to insurance companies. I should add that those are immensely profitable corporations, immensely profitable banks and insurance companies. They're receiving that largesse on top of \$520 million already provided to banks through the elimination of the capital tax. In total, this government has announced \$4 billion in corporate and capital tax giveaways. An incredible \$1.2 billion will be pocketed by banks and insurance companies, the vast majority going to just eight

companies which dominate Ontario's financial sector. Those eight companies are Scotiabank, Royal Bank, TD Bank, Bank of Montreal, CIBC, Sun Life Financial, Manulife Financial Corp. and Great-West Life.

But interestingly, even with all this generosity on the part of the people of Ontario, all this incredible flow of funds into their coffers, all this potential for huge profit growth, in fact, in the past year, employment in the financial sector has decreased by 25,000 jobs. It doesn't sound like a good investment to me. It sounds to me like the people of Ontario, hard-pressed as they are, are putting vast amounts of money into these banks and insurance companies and actually seeing employment decrease in that sector. That being the case, how can you justify putting that kind of money into that sector?

As I have said in an earlier comment, Paul Martin brought in the biggest corporate tax cut in Canadian history when he was finance minister for Canada at the end of the last decade. The reality is that since that budget came down, we have had ongoing decline in the manufacturing sector in this country. Life has gotten harder, not better. Wages have stagnated, as I said a few minutes ago. That is not a strategy. To use an old historic commentary, George Bush the elder referred to a similar policy on the part of Ronald Reagan as "voodoo economics." If you think that simply giving away all your cash is going to bring jobs and prosperity, that is not a credible statement. Profits in that sector have increased significantly, CEOs have been awarded significant compensation increases, dividends for shareholders have been boosted, but the hiring spree never materialized.

The truth of the matter is that corporate tax rates are only one of the many factors that a business considers when making investments. Evidence shows that corporate tax giveaways have very little positive impact on job creation since they have almost no impact on business capital investment spending.

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Since 2000, the combined federal-Ontario corporate tax rate will have been reduced from 44% to 25%. This province should be booming. If corporate tax cuts are really the sunshine that makes an economy grow, then why have we seen stagnation of wages? Why have we seen loss of manufacturing jobs? Why have we seen loss of jobs in the financial services sector? That is a very generous cut in the tax rate for corporations in Ontario. It did not translate into economic investment, into business investment, into jobs and salaries. That's the reality.

This government has decided to continue following a policy that has shown itself not to produce the results. In fact, rather than investing in productivity—things like machinery and equipment—and creating jobs, corporations have been accumulating cash and similar liquid assets at an increasing rate. According to Statistics Canada, corporate holdings of cash and similar assets reached nearly half a trillion dollars by the third quarter of 2010. Since the beginning of the recession, businesses added \$83 billion to cash holdings.

I had the opportunity to listen to the Minister of Finance last week at the Economic Club of Canada. His

mantra continuously was “corporate tax cuts paving the way to prosperity.” If you look at the reality of the last decade, if you look at the experience in the United States, then you can only conclude that this is a strategy that has demonstrated that it is a failure, and it is a strategy pursued by this government that will simply undermine the government and society of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mario Sergio: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker—Madam Speaker; I’m sorry. We are so used to that, but it’s nice to see you in the chair, Madam Speaker.

I had the wonderful opportunity at 7:30 this morning to attend one of the sessions on the recent budget. It was extremely well attended. We had the chambers of commerce from Vaughan, King, Aurora, Richmond Hill and Markham. It was extremely well attended. Of course, we had the people from York University as well.

I have to say that I came out of that session with the overwhelming reaction that the people loved the budget. Some people would say that this is an election budget. Perhaps it is. Maybe it is an election budget. But when you look at the content of the budget, you have to say that this is the result—and this is what came out of the session this morning: If we are doing so well, it is because of the results of the various programs put in place by Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal government in the past several years.

Today we are seeing why we were able to come up with a budget that still keeps the most important sectors, and I think everybody loves health care and education and jobs.

It was only maybe 18 months, a year or so ago, that we were devastated here, especially in Ontario, when we employed the largest car manufacturer in the nation. We were able to recoup 91% or 93% of the jobs lost. I think that speaks well for our economy, it speaks well for the province of Ontario, it speaks well for the people and it speaks well for us.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O’Toole: I listened carefully and attentively to the member from Toronto—Danforth. We know where he’s coming from, and we understand it and we respect it. What I have the greatest difficulty with is the McGuinty government. We know—he just said it; the member who just commented just said it—that this is an election budget. What we know for certain—it’s been said at the two budget breakfasts I had. Everybody said the same thing: “There are future taxes. How are they going to pay down the deficit of \$16.8 billion?”

It also says that in 2018—2018—they’ll still be paying down the debt. The children here today will almost be in university by the time this is paid off. It’s just absolutely—here’s the greatest truth, and I’m reading right from the budget; it’s a prop, if you will. This is from the finance minister. Here’s what it says: Chaired by Don Drummond, “The commission will advise” Premier McGuinty “on more fundamental reforms—changes that

will help protect health care and education over the long term while accelerating the elimination of the deficit.”

Now, you can’t have it both ways. What he’s going to do now—interestingly enough, this blue ribbon panel from Bay Street will probably come up with a reasonable report. But, guess what? It’s going to come in after the election in October. What’s going to happen is they’re going to say, “Oh, my goodness.”

Here’s what we hear in the hallways at Queen’s Park: Don Drummond, who recommended the HST, will probably recommend just moving the HST to 15% from 13%. Tax and spend is the only Liberal policy that’s been consistent since the beginning of time. I for one encourage the people of Ontario not to be fooled this time with this McGuinty government—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments? Minister of Education.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Actually, I am going to quote from the budget document, not the budget speech, and I am going to focus my comments on the remarks of the member from Toronto—Danforth. He spoke a great deal about jobs. That is an important issue, certainly for people in any riding. When I received the budget document—it is available online, and I would encourage any Ontarian who has the time and is so inclined to go online and read the budget, because that has really important, good and accurate information.

The information I’m going to point them to first is a chart on page 158. It’s a chart with information from Statistics Canada, the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics and the United Kingdom Office for National Statistics. Very clearly, there’s a diagram there which identifies that in the United States since the recession they’ve recovered about 14.5% of their jobs; in the United Kingdom, about 38.9%; and in Ontario, we have recovered fully 90.9% of the jobs that were lost. That’s from StatsCan.

Another interesting chart, if you flip to page 160: Ontario has also fared well compared to most other provinces and US states. Since May 2009, Ontario employment has grown 3.6% above that of other large Canadian provinces and well ahead of all comparable US states, some of which continue to see declines—and these are the jurisdictions we compete with. Those statistics are from StatsCan and the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, so very impartial, independent bodies that have provided these charts included in our budget document. It’s very interesting reading. I recommend it to the member for Toronto—Danforth.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It’s a pleasure to join the two-minute responses to the member from Toronto—Danforth. The member spoke at length about several issues: jobs and growth, education, health care, mentioned the north and talked about the private sector. I thought I’d just make a few comments on each of those areas in the minute and a half that I have.

The jobs and growth section: \$1.3 billion of new investment with private sector partners will happen as a result of this budget, including nearly \$175 million from

the government to create and retain nearly 10,000 jobs. That includes over 30 clean energy manufacturers who have or will set up in Ontario, which is quite significant. I thought we'd hear from some independent parties. For instance, when we talked about jobs and the economy, which the member from Toronto–Danforth did, the Ottawa Citizen says, “Ontario’s budget is a thoughtful response to a difficult problem, most of which has been caused by circumstances rather than policy....”

“The Duncan budget is a considered one in that it recognizes the problems of health care and the danger of taking stimulus away too quickly from a badly damaged Ontario economy.”

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In terms of the north and health care, the Sault Star ran a comment saying:

“This money is much more than a goody.

“Lives will be saved and the quality of life for countless women, regardless of financial means, will be improved with more accessible breast screening.”

Finally, I thought I would address the member’s comments about reducing the deficit, and share with the House an editorial from the Toronto Star:

“Given the short-term, partisan politicking that was the hallmark of the federal Conservative government’s budget last week, it is particularly refreshing that Premier Dalton McGuinty has chosen to continue to govern for the long term rather than switch to election mode....

“It’s high time for Hudak to do the same.”

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Toronto–Danforth has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: That was an interesting series of comments. My thanks to the members from York West and Durham, the Minister of Education and the member from Kitchener–Conestoga.

I think that the Minister of Finance did refer to it as an election budget. I don’t think he was messing around when he said that; he was quite serious.

I want to say, Minister of Education, that I think you’re quite correct. I’ve been asked before by reporters on television panels, “How do I decide which of you is telling the truth?” Strangely enough, I’ve said, “Read the budget. Take a look.” When you look at this budget, if you look at the pages that you referred to regarding the comparison between the United States, the UK and Ontario in retention or regaining of jobs, what’s most interesting to me is that the United States is the jurisdiction that went on the biggest tax-cutting splurge of all at the beginning of this last decade. Under George W. Bush, there were extraordinary tax cuts that imperilled the financial stability of the United States, tax cuts that have been continued. Those tax cuts, I’d argue, similar on a larger scale to the corporate tax cuts that are being put in place here, feed speculation, increase the holding of wealth at the very top points of society and undermine the ability of ordinary working families to actually buy the services and goods they need to live their lives. It undermines what an economist would call the domestic

market. I look at this graph. I know that in the United States those tax cuts created a bubble economy which imploded—no surprise that the jobs aren’t regained. We are in danger of going down the same path.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: During this 20-minute segment, I will be sharing my time with the member for Ottawa Centre.

At the outset, I’d just like to remind viewers that you can see the entire budget online at www.fin.gov.on.ca.

I’d like to start by saying I’m going to speak about the budget for 2011-12 and what a difference it’s making in the fast-growing and dynamic communities such as I represent in Mississauga, all around the city of Toronto. This 905 belt, as it’s known by its dominant landline area code, defines both the strengths and the needs of the people who live and work there. This is composed of such cities as, of course, my home of Mississauga, of Brampton, Oakville, Vaughan, Woodbridge and nearly two dozen other communities, all of which are not only an hour’s drive or less from the metro Toronto borders, but all of which are defined by a real vibrancy and growth. Businesses there, large and small, are all world-class businesses; they all trade abroad. For them, the notion that trade means doing business with the United States—many of those people have come from outside Canada, outside North America, and that doesn’t translate. They’re interested in doing business wherever the business is. That’s why this budget was important to those people.

This is a budget that continues important work that’s in progress. Starting with Open Ontario in 2009-10, Ontario set our province’s unique strength to work in the 21st century. We need our strengths working in a global context. This budget of 2011-12 extends the tax reforms that removed, for example, the dead weight of a cold war tax relic. By that, of course, I mean the old provincial sales tax. I think it’s worth reminding Ontarians about what a bad, ineffective, expensive and inefficient job-killing tax that they’re finally, firmly, permanently rid of.

The PST was expensive. It taxed and retaxed and retaxed the same thing multiple times over. Especially in our area, in the 905 belt, for manufacturers with long supply chains, this would mean that things that people consumed in their businesses, whether it would be tools or supplies or office furnishings or equipment, all of those things were taxed. Then that tax had to be built into the price that you passed along to the next person. That was built into the price that you passed to the next person, the next person and the next person.

Let’s just imagine a business that had five or six steps in the supply chain, and that’s not many. Let’s suppose that 1% of your total business costs—in many businesses, it’s more—was embedded sales tax. So your suppliers have 1% embedded in what they sell you in raw materials or in parts or in things that you use. And your business has 1% imbedded in it, and you pass that along to another one who would be your wholesaler, who will pass it

along to a distributor, who will pass it along to a retailer, where you will buy it. It's not like you're paying an 8% PST; you're probably paying somewhere between 12% and, in some cases, 30% and 40%. All the province of Ontario ever wanted was 8%, and now that's what we can get. That's the difference that making that change made.

The PST was inefficient. A single transaction had been subject to two different taxes at two separate rates collected by two sets of bureaucrats. Ontario is able to phase out some 1,250 taxation-related men and women who've served the province very well. But we were able to harmonize and streamline those jobs. Also, we no longer have two different and incompatible sets of rules. Something like about that much documentation is now gone forever—just not used, because it's one tax, one set of rules.

This budget builds on the abolition of that expensive, inefficient, outdated and no-longer-needed Cold War relic.

When you listen to radio and television or you look at print ads, how do you know this is being passed through to you? Look for the code language, something that says, "And, for a limited time only, we pay the HST." That's retail-speak. Let me take you, as a former marketing guy, into the boardrooms, and let's translate what "And, for a limited time only, we pay the HST" means. What it means, as you're discussing this internally, is the following: "Look, we're saving money because we don't have to pay 8% tax on everything that we use in our business, and we're going to pass that tax through to the customers—not because we're particularly altruistic but because, if we don't do it, our competition has figured this out, as we have, and they know that they can make as much or more money than they did before with a lower price, and besides, if our competition is cutting their price and we don't, then they're going to take our business, and we won't get it back. However, we're going to pass it through as a discount rather than a price reduction, but our next model and our new stuff will say 'new and improved,' and it's going to boast a lower price." While people have inventory they're going to say, "And, for a limited time only, we pay the HST." When the new stuff comes out, people will be saying, "At a new lower price."

Businesses can lower their price, and they can maintain their earnings and profits because their costs are down and their taxes are down. That's why your prices are down on many products: carpets and tiles, a lot of building materials and especially cars. The region of Peel estimates the savings to Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon taxpayers at some \$13 million per year in vehicle fleet purchases and services alone.

So if this tax harmonization is the best way to go, then you'd think the whole world would want to do taxation on consumption in this way, wouldn't you? If you answered yes, you'd be right. Rather than list the 140-plus jurisdictions that successfully save people and businesses money and create jobs and build prosperity with a value-added tax like the Ontario harmonized sales tax, let's do

the opposite. Let's list the places that don't: Central Africa, Burma, parts of South Asia, Greenland and the United States of America. With the United States sending more than a trillion dollars abroad each year to other countries that use the wealth of ordinary Americans to work against the United States of America, it is possible that Americans might land on a Canadian-style national value-added tax sooner rather than later.

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But in the meantime, our Canadian dollar continues to gain against the US dollar, and you think, is that good or bad? Well, it's good if you're buying stuff from the United States, but if you're a manufacturer, it's offset by the price advantage of doing business in Canada due to lower taxes and lower business costs. In the 905 region this means our manufacturing firms are poised to recover strongly as the USA starts its recovery. We're seeing it already.

Here in Ontario we run a lean government with a well-regulated financial sector. In fact, the 300,000 people who work in the financial sector in Ontario make that sector one of Ontario's competitive advantages. Banks and other financial institutions here have been saved from their own excesses by a regulatory system that kept Ontarians from pouring their money into bad investments, as happened all over the world. As an example, Ireland, the Celtic Tiger, is now down to just two banks. Our Ontario-based banks—and that's all of them in Canada—are the type of good investment that make a depositor's money safe. They offer good returns on their shares to ordinary Ontarians who want to save their money and earn a good return on their savings.

Interjection: Jim Flaherty knows that.

Mr. Bob Delaney: As one of my colleagues said, the Minister of Finance, Jim Flaherty, knows that. In fact, permanent cuts to personal income taxes will mean that for the 2010 tax year, which is the one that we're all filling out right now, taxes will be reduced on average by about \$200 for 93% of Ontario income taxpayers. Wow, not bad—the elimination of Ontario personal income tax for about 90,000 lower-income taxpayers.

I'm sure my colleague has a lot more to say on this, but I've appreciated the opportunity to discuss some of the differences that Ontario's budget will make.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak on this budget, and thank you to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville for his presentation on the tax implications in terms of our growing economy.

We have all been talking about and insisting that the viewers out there read the budget. I think it's a great idea. Instead of hearing the rhetoric from the opposition parties, it's good to read the actual document. It's fairly easy to read. I often hear from people about transparency and accountability and making sure this kind of information is available to them. It is a fairly decent-sized document, and there's a simpler website address which

one can go to. It's ontario.ca/budget, and you can get this whole document to read. I encourage folks to read it.

I have to say that I had a great opportunity to talk to a lot of people in my riding of Ottawa Centre over the weekend about this budget, and by and large I received very positive feedback. I receive positive feedback about this budget because people are starting to see that the economy is turning around. People are starting to see that we are creating and regaining jobs back in the province. And what people were especially happy about in my riding is the very strong stance the McGuinty government has taken through this budget in making sure that outlining its priority in terms of protecting public services is as clear as it gets; that at no cost will the McGuinty government not protect its public services. We will ensure that our health care and our education and our schools and our hospitals are there for all Ontarians. People in my riding really have appreciated that very firm commitment that it is a balanced budget, that it is a prudent budget, that it makes a very important commitment. The few new initiatives that are included in this budget are very strategic in nature, are very focused on really important things.

One in particular that I heard a lot about is the new investment in the mental health and addictions strategy. I received kudos all around from my community. I was at the opening of the Youth Services Bureau, a youth drop-in centre, on Friday in my riding. The Youth Services Bureau is a fantastic organization working with youth on a lot of different issues, but in particular dealing with mental health and addictions issues. Person after person came to me and spoke to me about being appreciative about the government's investment; I think it's about \$257 million over three years on the mental health and addictions strategy, starting with children and youth. There was a great recognition that the government was really stepping up to the plate and making those very important and strategic investments.

In fact, I was there at the Youth Services Bureau for the opening of the youth drop-in centre because it was a beneficiary of the stimulus funding as well. I think the province had invested over \$250,000 in that centre, which is vital for our young people, especially our street youth, so that they have very good services available to them. I was very happy to see the kind of investment being made, through the stimulus funding, in community infrastructure that will benefit, for years and years to come, our young generation.

I can speak to many investments that we've been making in Ottawa. Since 2003, we have invested more than \$1 billion in transit and transportation for the city of Ottawa, and that does not include the \$600 million that we are investing for a new light rail train system in the city, not to mention that we have been uploading since 2003 all the services that were downloaded by the Harris government, things like ODSP, the Ontario disability support program; Ontario Works; land ambulances; and public health. The uploading that is taking place from the province through the city of Ottawa has resulted in an

increase of revenue for the city of Ottawa by \$140 million annually. That has been increasing every year. That's a net benefit of about 14% in terms of property taxes to the city of Ottawa.

In addition, for the stimulus funding we invested about \$400 million across the city, including building and renovating new arenas, community centres, access to libraries, and building new roads and bridges: very key investments in public infrastructure and community infrastructure.

I'm also very proud of the investment of \$189 million in the Ottawa Convention Centre, which, by the way, opens in eight days. If you haven't been to Ottawa lately, please come and visit this beautiful brand new convention centre, which is a provincial crown corporation. I want to commend the Minister of Tourism, who's right there, who made that very crucial investment in our convention centre, which is now booked solid for two years, to the point that we don't have enough hotel rooms to accommodate all the visitors who will be coming to the city of Ottawa. We are extremely proud of this team. So thank you, Minister Chan, for that investment. I know you're coming to Ottawa for the opening.

Applause.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: A big round of applause for the minister for really believing in Ottawa and making that crucial investment which will result in new jobs and more economic growth in the city of Ottawa.

Most importantly, I want to mention the more than \$600 million of capital funding investment in our local hospitals: CHEO; the new regional cancer centre on the general campus at the Ottawa Hospital and the Queensway Carleton centre; the doubling of Montfort—this is the only French teaching hospital in all of Ontario, which the Harris government would have closed. We saved it, and we have doubled it in size so that more people are getting health care services in the French language in the city of Ottawa. Thank you, McGuinty government, for believing in the city.

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It's the same thing with the cardiac unit at CHEO. That was going to get closed under the previous Harris government, which conveniently gets forgotten by my friends from the opposition. We saved that program when the McGuinty government came into office in 2003.

This is a budget in the right direction. We are making investments in things that are important to all Ontarians; that is, our education system and our health care system. I get so many questions about our education system, making sure that we continue to make the investments in our young people.

Just because we had a recession does not mean that our children should stop learning. Just because we had a recession does not mean that those who are sick, especially our seniors and elderly, do not get quality health care. We will continue to invest in our vital public services, while at the same time driving toward balancing the budget. But our government is not going to balance the budget on the backs of cutting and slashing vital

public services like health care and education. That is not what Ontarians want. That is not what I hear in my riding of Ottawa Centre.

People want to make sure that full-day kindergarten is available to all four- and five-year-olds in the city of Ottawa. We are extremely proud that we are adding another 200 schools starting in September 2011. In my riding, I've got already got two schools: Cambridge Street Public School and W.E. Gowling. We'll have Connaught Public School, and then I've got, I think, five or six more schools coming online in September 2012. Parents keep asking me, "When are the other schools going to come in place?" That's the kind of investment we need to make to ensure that we have quality of life, and that is extremely important.

All of our families—every Ontarian works very hard. They work hard and pay their taxes to ensure that they have the quality of life they so well deserve, which means good health care and good education, and that is what this budget is focused on. It does not have all kinds of goodies for every kind of cause; of course not, because the times do not allow for that. But what it has is very targeted, strategic investments, things like risk management programs for our farmers so they can continue to feed us. I'm very proud that we have a lot of local markets in my riding of Ottawa Centre. We continue to buy local foods, and we allow farmers to continue to grow.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to hear that the member from Ottawa—

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Centre.

Ms. Sylvia Jones:—Centre—thank you—was out in his riding listening to people. I also had that opportunity this weekend. We had our home show that the Lions put on. Thousands of people came and spoke to me. I am not exaggerating when I say that not one person asked me about the budget. What they did ask me about was the ever-increasing hydro bills. They asked me how they're going to continue to afford to stay in their homes. They asked me when the McGuinty government is coming up for re-election, because they'd really like an opportunity to vote on that. But not one person was talking about the Ontario budget, which leads you to two decision points: Were they not talking about it because there wasn't much in it? Yes, I think that's the case. There really wasn't a lot of detail in this budget. They didn't have anything that they could actually discuss.

Now, I will give credit where credit is due. Obviously, I'm very pleased that you were talking about child and youth mental health. I'm thrilled that that's actually in the budget. I need to have some clarification on exactly where the money is going to come and flow through. There are some decisions on whether that's through the education system, children and youth, or the Ministry of Health. I'll give credit where credit is due. I'm happy to see that moving forward.

But I did not have any discussions, any questions on the Ontario budget from last Tuesday—what they liked

about it and what they didn't like about it—because there was nothing there to discuss. I think that's what we're finding when we go out into our ridings. It's just an indication that it's much to-do about nothing, I'm afraid.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: Where do I begin on this budget? Well, let's start. No poverty issues in here. Nothing about pensions. Nothing about HST relief. Nothing about the environment. The 600,000 jobs that they've been touting in here for months and years, and the 50,000 green venture jobs: not happening.

If you want to come to Hamilton—since 2007, you've lost 20,000 manufacturing jobs. You've brought a few medical jobs to Hamilton, and you've brought a few possible, in a year or two, solar panel jobs that may add up to a couple of hundred jobs, if they happen. I'm short about 19,600 jobs in Hamilton, so when I hear more about that, I'm going to be a much happier camper.

The Liberals talk about all the things they're going to do, and every time they talk about them, they end up being a bunch of broken promises. I've sat and watched them for years; for 15 years, I've watched them. Everything is wonderful and hunky-dory; the member from Ottawa Centre just stood and talked about how everybody loves it. Nobody loves it. The reason they're not talking about it is because there's nothing in it. That's the problem.

They dealt a little bit with agriculture; they did a little bit about screening; they did a little bit about this. But the main issues—HST, poverty, environment, jobs and all the things that are affecting the daily income of the people of Ontario—have not been dealt with, and they won't be dealt with in this budget.

As they say, I guess we'll leave it up to the people of Ontario to decide if they got a good deal or not. But from my perspective and from where I'm from, believe me, the Liberals are in big trouble, because there's nothing in that budget to help the people of Hamilton.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mario Sergio: I'm on a roll. I'm standing for the second time today for two minutes. That's a good record.

Let me say that I appreciate very much the comments from the members for the wonderful cities of Mississauga—Streetsville and Ottawa Centre, as well as my colleague on the other side from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

I'm speaking to my constituents and anyone else who would like to get not only the English but the French version of the document as well. It is available. It can be obtained through our offices. It can be obtained directly on the Web. I would say: Get a copy, because there is a lot of good stuff in this budget.

If this is not declared an election budget, I'd like to make it one because I know it's good for the people of Ontario and I know it's good for the people in York West, especially when we address, for the very first time, a very large issue. I know we have a lot of people, young people, with mental issues. There is a part in here for

seniors and all the others who are in need and are using the Ontario drug benefit program. There is good stuff in there for them.

But we have to look around and say that people are working. When the people are working, they don't complain so much. We have been opening up schools; we have been opening up hospitals. We have been making improvements all over the place. When we do that, we don't hear too many complaints from people.

Yes, there are some areas where people say, "I'm paying a bit more for hydro." But let's put everything in perspective. All around, I believe that the government has been doing a good job, and this is a good budget, and let's keep it that way.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have a chance to respond to the comments this afternoon on the budget motion by the member for Mississauga–Streetsville and the member for Ottawa Centre. I'm not sure which of them is going to respond, but I want to ask a question, and I hope that one of them will answer this question.

If we look at the budget papers document—of course, this is the document that is given to us on the day of the budget. This is the government's document; it's put out by the Ministry of Finance. If you look at page 205, you will see Ontario's so-called plan to eliminate the deficit. As we know, the government is compelled, with each budget—if it's presenting a deficit budget, like this one is, they have to produce a plan as to how they're going to balance the budget over a period of years. This so-called plan to eliminate the deficit would show, if we believe the government, that they are on track to balancing the budget by 2017-18. But of course, the Ministry of Finance gives us the provisions that will be necessary, the assumptions that are necessary, in order to achieve that. If you look at the document, it says that they will need to hold growth in program expenses to an average of 1% between 2010-11 and 2013-14.

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How is the government going to hold its program expenses to less than 1% on average over that period of time? I'd like to hear the explanation as to how that's going to happen, especially when you consider the track record of the McGuinty Liberal government going back to 2003, when its overall spending increases have been substantially more than that, more in the range of 6% to 8% a year. In more recent times, if we look at the total expense increase from, say, 2008-09, it goes up \$12 billion to 2009-10. The next year, it goes up \$7 billion, far in excess of 1%. We know this is a goal that is completely unachievable under this government. I would ask these members to explain how they're possibly going to do this.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Mississauga–Streetsville has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'd like to thank my colleagues from Dufferin–Caledon, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek,

York West and Wellington–Halton Hills for their thoughtful comments and suggestions.

Let me just add a few words to my colleague from Dufferin–Caledon. People will stay in their homes because their tax reductions and credits more than offset those things that have caused a price increase. In fact, the Toronto-Dominion Bank in a very recent report says two thirds of the savings from the harmonized sales tax are already in the hands of the consumer.

To my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, who said that he couldn't find any of the tax relief, let's just give you a list of them: the Ontario child benefit, the northern Ontario energy credit, the permanent new sales tax credit, the transition tax relief, the energy and property tax credit, the 10% reduction on electricity bills. He and his party keep saying, "Lower them 8%." We did one better: We lowered them 10%. And more importantly, the senior homeowner tax credit to help our folks stay in their homes, and finally, the children's activity tax credit. If there is anything in here, it's a multitude of ways in which Ontario families can save money.

To my colleague from York West, he gets it. His constituents know that it's not how you compare against the Almighty, which is why they keep re-electing him, it's how you compare against the alternative.

Finally, to my colleague from Wellington–Halton Hills, our government managed to find a surprise \$5.5-billion deficit when first elected in 2003-04. And ahead of schedule, we balanced the budget and ran three consecutive surpluses. As to the assumptions in the current budget document, later this year the Auditor General of Ontario will tell us whether he believes or disbelieves those very assumptions.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: Some of the members on the government side, the McGuinty members, have clearly been reading the briefing notes they've been given and following the script very closely. What we're trying to do here is actually bring some light to it. If a person thinks they should be happy with a \$16-billion deficit, then they really haven't read the document. Here's the document. I've read it, and if there are some questions, I'd be happy to help people on the government side—who haven't read it or they would be outraged.

Here's the budget bill. Most of the members are still perhaps working through the paperwork. This is Bill 173; that's actually the budget bill. When you look at it, you'll see there are 146 pages, 41 schedules. If somebody over there says they've actually read it, there are probably some questions left to be answered.

I'll say to you that if you do read it, you'll see that there are so many small, seemingly insignificant subtleties in this bill that you would be quite frightened—and you will be surprised.

I think what's most important—let's look at the other document that I think is part of the discussion. This is the document that I'm referring to now, the actual document that preceded the budget. This is from the Standing

Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, the prebudget consultations. I participated. A lot of members had the chance to participate in them; I have for 15 or 16 years. These are very important.

In this section here, there were 288 presenters, many talking about affordable housing, many talking about poverty, many talking about the aging community. There is a list of recommendations from each of the sectors that I have here that shows that this budget clearly is like wallpapering a wall that has mildew on it. It isn't fixed.

The hard-working people of Ontario, the families who are out of work or can't pay their hydro bill or their auto insurance or pay tuition for students that's the highest in Canada, are all sweating while the members over here are drinking fine wines and dining on the tax dollar. This is what I see and what I think, and that's what the people of Ontario are frustrated with. Eight years of bloat is what we've gotten.

I look at the clippings for today. How do the writers of the province of Ontario feel? I'm not making this up. I'm going to read the first one: "Home Care Sees Too Little Cash, Critics Say."

What's the biggest problem in Ontario? Health care. What's the biggest problem? The aging population. What's the biggest problem? Long-term care. There are no beds. What's the biggest problem in hospitals? The alternate-level-of-care bed blockers. Nobody can get into the beds because there's someone with a chronic disease who they can't discharge because there are no beds for them.

The McGuinty solution? Create regulation of retirement homes. What is a retirement home? There's not one cent of McGuinty dollars in those retirement homes. That's to take all the money from the hard-working, aging people in this province—\$4,000 to \$6,000 a month to stay in a retirement home that's regulated. That's their solution.

If you look at the annual funding for health care in your budget, it's about 1.9%. What has the average growth in health care funding been? It has been 6% and 7%.

I look at all of the people we see on the streets suffering from mental illness. It has been complete neglect. If it wasn't for the member from Whitby—Oshawa, this government would have done nothing about that. Christine Elliott forced them to do something about that.

What did they do on the agricultural piece? Nothing, in my view. They said they've done something. It's an insurance plan where the agricultural community is paying.

I get so upset when I start going through these documents and realize the real truth of what's going on. I don't want to be part of it. It's got to be said, and so I'm going to say some of it now.

Here's one of the sections of the report. I'm reading from the report filed to the Minister of Finance. Did he listen? The report's title is *The McGuinty Government: A Threat to Ontario Families*. I'll just read a couple of sections.

Here's one. This isn't a quote of mine. This is a quote from a person out there, perhaps one of my constituents

or one of their constituents. This is a constituent, not a politician with something they're trying to sell. I hope they're listening. It was recorded on December 2, 2010, from an Ontario resident—Ontario Legislative Assembly, Hansard transcript. I'm reading word for word:

"I want to point out that my car insurance has gone up almost 30%, while my coverage has been decreased by 50%.... What can I, as a citizen, do to express my shock?..."

"A letter I received from my insurers tells me the Ontario government allowed these increases. Along with the increased taxes due to the HST being spread to many new items, my spending dollar is less and less. You can be sure that as a senior citizen my income is not going up to match any of this."

Out-of-pocket health care expenses paid by middle-class households—this is when they delisted drugs and delisted services, whether it's getting your eyes tested or your hearing tested—have increased 43% in the last 10 years.

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"Direct costs increased by 38% while health insurance premiums soared by 53%," as has tuition.

They try to forget that what they first got elected on was a deception, when they said that they wouldn't raise your taxes and raised the taxes—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Excuse me. I would ask the member to withdraw that.

Mr. John O'Toole: An error-filled statement.

I withdraw that. I have to rephrase it, more importantly.

They increased the health tax, which takes in \$3 billion to \$4 billion more a year. I can't believe—now I know how this person feels.

I'm wondering if somehow or another, Premier McGuinty has changed. He used to be reasonably caring; he maybe didn't handle the truth carefully, but he often looked as if he cared. Now he's going around with almost a smile, and the people of Ontario are hurting. Let's at least remember that and acknowledge that they're hurting. Whether it's auto insurance, home heating, medication, long-term care—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order. Stop the clock. The members from the government side will have a chance to respond to the member in short order. But you can't respond to that which you don't hear, so I would ask for order on all sides.

Thank you. Continue, member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: If there is something I said that has offended them, if it was the truth, I'm not sorry. But if it wasn't the truth, I'm sorry.

Here's the real issue, though: If you go on, it says that a TD—that's where Don Drummond runs the place. Here's what it says: "A TD Economics Special Report, dated February 9, 2011, warns that excessive household debt in Ontario results in greater vulnerability than in many other regions of the country. The report highlights an important distinction between Ontario and the rest of

Canada, where increased borrowing is for purposes other than financing a home purchase, but rather for things such as home renovations and basic consumption.

"Personal bankruptcy figures for Ontario reveal that in the first nine months of 2010, 37,462 residents declared personal bankruptcy," and a further 22,000, it goes on to say, people are being left behind—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Just please listen. Some of you should actually cross the floor. I can't understand why you're backing this. You're standing in favour of hollowing out Ontario. We're now a have-not province. It's so discouraging.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member for Peterborough.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Take some control, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. John O'Toole: I can hardly get a word in edgewise.

I would say that I understand, first of all—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Peterborough again.

Mr. John O'Toole: I understand that they're in trouble; I fully understand that. Let's start with the simple things they can understand. Check your hydro bill. Check how you're actually accounting for the revenue in hydro. You're not even reporting the revenue honestly.

The strategic debt retirement fund—SDRM—you actually have not accounted for the money in revenue. Where has the money gone?

Then I look at the other report I got the other day on the \$100,000 club. That report is six times as big as it was when you started. We're paying more, we're getting less. The people of Ontario will not be fooled again. It's so disheartening.

On our side, our leader, Tim Hudak, was almost tearful in his lecture to us about being accountable and being transparent and standing up for the people of Ontario, and having some respect for the people of Ontario. That's what he says. For once in a while, please—some of the ministers are actually here today. I'm surprised they haven't left.

But the real point being—I'm just going by the newspaper clippings: "The Waiting Game"—this is talking about health care waiting. That's the next column. "The Cost of Drugs: Breaking the Bank to Stay Alive"—that's the catastrophe in the drug plans. That's what that one's about. "LCBO Blows Off Beer." These are the titles. I won't use the next title; it's less than appropriate for the place. But my point being, it's what I hear. I hear it in the coffee shops; I hear it at the budget breakfasts I've had for the last two or three days. Ironically, the company—I want to thank them personally—that provided the budget breakfast, the post-budget breakfast—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Minister of Education, I won't say it again.

Mr. John O'Toole: We invited the broader public. They were all there. In fact, the Premier quoted one of the things I said today. I'm not totally negative—well, mostly negative but not totally. But here's the point: Do you know how the presenters—I won't quote the accountant. A qualified, respected chartered accountant stood up and he had the budget with him, and he said, "You know, we've spent, our firm"—which is a very highly regarded firm in all of the GTA. He said, "This looks like an election budget to me." How right he was. How insightful he was. He said, "There's no tax increases or decreases here. They've assigned Don Drummond the task to figure out how to pay off the deficit." That's what he said.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: I said it earlier today. It's clear, too, that even Don Drummond, in his defence, warned Premier McGuinty and the finance minister—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Dwight Duncan.

Mr. John O'Toole: He warned me that Ontario is in a structural deficit. What that means is chronic overspending. Like right now, the deficit is around about—their own purpose deficit. Here's another piece of information: Their own purpose deficit—that's their own book deficit—shows at \$16.7 billion; okay? Now, that isn't the total deficit. Oh, no, no, no. Most of the deficit is off book. Most of the deficit is the WSIB. Theirs is about \$11 billion or \$12 billion extra. The other deficits are all the hospitals, including Jeff Leal's hospital in Peterborough, where he wrote them a check for \$8 million last week, which was to pay the severance for the 163 nurses.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: In your two minutes, you can respond. It's my time.

Mr. Jeff Leal: On a point of order, Speaker: He is absolutely false in that accusation because it was for training.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Excuse me. The Speaker is standing, the member from Durham. The member from Peterborough knows that is not a point of order.

We'll continue, member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I would ask the member to clarify. If my number was a little inaccurate, I'd ask him to stand and clarify because all the hospitals are suffering. Long-term-care homes. Children's aid society, be on notice: You're all going to be merged. Children's aids are all going to be merged and amalgamated, collapsed. You really have no consistent plan. They're chopping off arms and legs of the society to make it through to the election in October so that they can then make the debt double and triple.

One of our critics, Mr. Chudleigh, said earlier today that the debt—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Could you refer to the riding, please, the member from Durham? Thank you.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Halton.

Mr. John O'Toole: Halton. Haldimand, that's Toby. Pardon me.

Actually, I have some interesting things here that will help clarify for the other members. Here's the real thing on the debt. You've referred readers to the pages. Here's one here. Read page 297: "Total Debt"—actually, the total spending; this is the way to start this. The total spending in 2003, when you took over, was \$70 billion. Total spending today is \$125 billion.

Ask yourselves, is it any better? I'd say there are lots of holes in the ground that are empty. The debt was \$136 billion in 2003. What is it today? It's \$257 billion. That's the debt. Now, that's not all of it. No, no, a lot of it—I believe that Don Drummond will figure it out. I hope he eventually tells the truth. Here's the deal: The debt is probably, I think, close to \$300 billion right now.

What does this say to our children here? The debt servicing charge today—that's the interest on the debt—is just over \$10 billion. It's the fourth largest expenditure outside of capital.

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We all know that interest is quite low now, because that's how you stimulate the economy: Keep money cheap. Well, when you flush out the economy—all these deficits and that, increased overspending—interest will always go up. Interest always has to exceed inflation. If you put too much money into the economy, it creates inflation, and interest always has to be higher than inflation; it's an old economic rule. Every one-point increase in interest is half a billion dollars of annual penalty. And who are you paying it to? You're probably paying it to Americans or people in other countries.

I remain worried about Ontario. The only thing I'm impressed with is that I believe the people of Ontario have caught on. They can't spend their way out of the problem. Bob Rae, the Liberal leader—well, he's not the leader yet; he's just going to wait till Ignatieff is finished. He'll probably run for leader of the Liberals, which is fine—I know it's a different topic.

Here's the deal. I was on the budget committee in 1993-94, when Bob Rae was going over the cliff slowly. He had a parachute, but he was going over the cliff. The budget was \$48 billion; the deficit was \$12 billion. That's 25%. Their deficit here right now is getting close to 20%. The debt to GDP is about 35%; it's 35.4% debt to GDP. That means that 30% of all the growth in the economy is taken up paying off your debt; that's what it means.

Bob Rae had a very important thing. It was called the social contract. If you look at public sector spending—the \$125 billion total spending I mentioned in here—about 75% of that is public sector wages and benefits. Then you look at that \$100,000-a-year list. Imagine the head of Hydro One making \$900,000 a year. What are

they doing? They contract out most of the stuff that's being done. Then I look at some of the hospitals. Honest to goodness, there's a hospital in Peterborough where the former—the guy didn't even work last year and got \$348,000 for not even showing up. My goodness. And they aren't even angry about it. I'm just perplexed.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's tragic.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, it's tragic.

There are other really interesting tables in here that help. I know that the people on the government side haven't read it. I know that for a fact from their speeches. They have no respect. The taxpayers have to pay this off—these young people here, the students in university, when the jobs are not here. I can't think for one moment of a good thing in the budget, honest to God. If they get up in their two minutes, I want them to list them. It will take you less than half a minute to do it.

But here's the point: I am seriously disappointed. This budget addresses nothing more than trying not to declare the damage until the patient has died. That's the problem. You can't recover if you aren't first willing to admit that you've made a mistake and fallen down. Start to listen to the people of Ontario, and you'll do the right thing. If you don't start listening soon, the people will give you your walking papers.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member from Durham. He's always animated and very passionate about his—he seems to get a rise out of the other side of the House very quickly.

I would just like to say that when I came here four years ago, I remember the finance minister standing up and scolding the official opposition on more than one occasion about the deficit they had left them, which was \$5 billion, I believe. You ask yourself now, why is there nothing in this budget for poverty, pensions, jobs, HST relief, the environment, the 600,000 imaginary jobs—they've now lowered that to 500,000—the 50,000 green venture jobs not happening, all the promises that again are not happening? And you say to yourself, "Well, here's a party that threw stones at the official opposition for their \$5-billion deficit, yet they live in a glass house." I think we're closing in on \$20 billion. I'd have to say—

Mr. Ted McMeekin: We didn't hide anything.

Mr. Paul Miller: Oh, there's a member saying they didn't hide anything. That's information. I believe the Samsung deal, which I got and asked for, and we had to go through freedom of information to get—90% of it's blacked out. There's no financial details in there on the deal, and I believe the deal was \$7 billion. So when they talk about accountability, there is absolutely no accountability over there unless they're forced into it, unless they're caught, unless we ask them for information that they won't even give to government members.

It's absolutely disgusting, what goes on over there, and the public are catching on. I think next October they're going to send a very strong message to that government about accountability, and it certainly is going to

open some eyes over there. I think it already has, because they look extremely nervous.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It's certainly a pleasure to make a few remarks on the somewhat inflammatory comments of the member from Durham.

In York region we had a budget breakfast this morning. It was sponsored by the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce, the Richmond Hill Chamber of Commerce and the Markham Board of Trade. The room was absolutely packed. We had representatives from all spheres of business. We had some of the titans of industry and development in York region. We had medium- and small-sized businesses. My colleagues and I from York region went through the budget, outlining the four major areas that, of course, are so well expressed in it. In other words, our focus on jobs and the economy; the health care promotion that we're seeing in this budget; protecting education, advancing education; and also managing responsibly, which clearly the business community understands very, very well.

The only questions that we had from the business community, in fact, were on the balanced approach that we had instituted in this budget. The business community wanted to be reassured that our whole tax package would remain as stated in the budget. And we were able to say, yes, indeed, we were totally committed to the entire package: cuts on business taxes, a huge advantage in stimulating the economy and creating jobs, the infrastructure provisions that are in the budget. It was extraordinarily well received. My constituents over the weekend had the same view. We're really confident that this is the way for Ontario to turn the corner and move forward.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'd like to congratulate the member from Durham, who talks so passionately about what has happened to this great province. He sees, he understands, that Ontario today is not the Ontario of yesteryear.

Ontario today is a have-not province, and that "have-not-iveness"—if that's a word—is growing in leaps and bounds. It's 142% greater this year than it was last year. We've moved up in our welfare payments this year—\$2.5 billion. The Liberals have a fancy formula which, if you read it quick and don't think too much about it, says it doesn't matter, but it does matter. If this continues, you know that Ontario will become a much poorer province. We'll lose jobs. People emigrate out of Ontario to other parts of Canada where they can make a better living, and as that trend continues, this province gets weaker. It's an indicator, and it's not an indicator that any sane, sensible government would ever ignore. I would look on it as a canary in a coal mine. A have-not province is a canary. It's on its last gasp, and that's a warning. It's a warning that danger is approaching.

There are all kinds of warning signs: our unemployment numbers, our emigration numbers and people

leaving Ontario for other parts. A have-not province—that's a warning sign; a growing deficit, growing debt. The trends that you see in this government are not healthy trends. It's a danger, and anyone who reads those numbers will know it's a danger. Don Drummond knows it's a danger, and I'm rather disappointed that this government, who can't bring themselves in their credibility to raise taxes, has hired this guy to raise taxes for them.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I found the comments to be very interesting. I think Ontarians understand that during the middle of the worst recession since the Great Depression of the 1930s, the choice facing Ontario, as faced most other governments, was, do we borrow the money or not borrow the money? Sometimes the options to not borrowing the money led to consequences far worse than borrowing the money.

I know that on this side of the House I have the privilege of serving with a group of people who love balanced budgets. We ran a surplus three years in a row, even after finding a \$5.5-billion structural deficit. So you ask yourself, can this government pay down a structural \$16.3-billion deficit? We've done it before. We'll do it again. We will return Ontario to a balanced budget. We'll generate a sustainable surplus. And just as we did during the past several years leading up to 2008, money used from the surpluses will pay down the long-term debt.

Among the things that Ontario has developed during the recession has been the renewable energy sector, something that we wish the federal government would recognize as being as important to the province of Ontario and the 13 million people who live here as the petrochemical industry is to the province of Alberta. I think they should be treating both of those industries the same. We're not asking for special treatment; we're asking for the same treatment.

We feel the same way about equalization. Don't tell Ontarians that we're a have-not province when four fifths of the money sent to the rest of Canada to be used in equalization payments comes from Ontario but we don't benefit from the money. That makes us a have, not a have-not.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Durham has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to thank the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek. He also represents very passionately. The member from Oak Ridges-Markham thought perhaps that I was a bit outlandish or whatever. The member from Halton, I think, reflected most honestly about my comments, which was no surprise. The member from Mississauga-Streetsville should actually listen to one of his constituents, Johnny Bower. That's who he should start listening to. He's reading too many fairy tales, this guy here.

If I think of the Liberals, the best way to do it—Tim Hudak said to us, "When you put your head down at night after a long day here, remember what your constitu-

ents are saying to you.” That’s what Tim Hudak has said to this caucus: “Listen to the people that you represent and you can’t go wrong.” It appears to me that they’ve lost complete respect for their constituents.

I don’t like to generalize—there are probably good people over there—but here’s the deal: If you want to know the future, you should always look to the past. Past behaviour is a very good and very strong indicator of future behaviour.

When I look back to the days, as has been mentioned by the Mississauga–Streetsville member, of the deepest recession in Ontario in some time, I think back to Mitch Hepburn’s day. Who was his finance minister? Nixon. They left a great, huge hole in the ground, called a deficit, and started the assiduous growth of debt in Ontario. A few years went by with a stable hand on the tiller, led by prominent Conservative governments for 42 years, I think—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: George Drew.

Mr. John O’Toole: George Drew and others.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Les Frost.

Mr. John O’Toole: And Frost, and a whole line of them.

Now here is what’s happening: We came to a point in the 1990s when Bob Rae and David Peterson came in. Who was his finance minister? Another Nixon. The Liberal response to challenge is to spend—tax and spend. That’s the future. If that’s what people want, in October you will have the right to make a decision—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: Needless to say, I’m very, very disappointed in the McGuinty government election budget. Instead of putting families first, making life more affordable, this budget puts corporate taxes first and leaves families paying more. It’s a blatantly partisan budget from a Liberal government desperate to defend the status quo that isn’t working.

Instead of taking the HST off hydro and home heating bills, this government continues to ignore its significant impact on household budgets. Instead of tax breaks for companies that create jobs right here in Ontario, the government is sticking with its strategy of no-strings-attached corporate tax giveaways.

The budget has a vague plan to cut \$800 million from health care budgets. Hospitals are getting cut in real terms. So nothing to protect front-line care is there. But this same government will not—I repeat, will not—cap health care CEOs’ salaries and severances.

While life gets more expensive for families and other provinces create more jobs, the Liberals walk around wearing red blinders, insisting that their plan is working and expecting us all to fall in line with their line of thinking and to believe it. They want us to believe it. The Liberals’ “service review” is a lovely new smoke-and-mirrors term to cover the real agenda of privatization of many of the well-delivered public services we all depend on daily. Having learned nothing from the 407 privatization mess and their own North Bay P3 hospital over-

the-top cost overruns, the finance minister used the budget to attack the opposition. So I am assuming that, when the actual budget attacks the opposition, there’s not a heck of a lot in that budget. I think the saying is that the best defence is an offence. So you distract the people by going after the government that was there before.

Also, they say that tax cuts would threaten achieving deficit timeline targets. The finance minister must decide who really needs the money in their pockets—large, financially well-off corporations and their overpaid executives or struggling everyday Ontarians who desperately need every deduction from the excessive extra costs of living that have been imposed by this government.

To be clear about the partisan nature of this exercise, the budget attacks opposition parties for proposing relief for families from the hated HST, but doesn’t mention the cost to everyday Ontarians of their excessive and expensive corporate tax cuts. The government estimates are based on unbelievable claims about businesses passing along savings to consumers. Anyone who has filled up at the pump recently knows that’s simply not true.

All the while, the government is determined to take \$800 million out of health care, and hospital budgets aren’t keeping up with inflation. The Liberals are proposing 60,000 new post-secondary spaces but they don’t mention that Ontario has the highest tuition fees in Canada, and there’s nothing in the budget that addresses the cost of post-secondary education. When students leave college or university, a lot of them owe \$40,000, \$50,000 or \$60,000. I think I bought my first house for about \$42,000, and I thought I’d never pay it off. They’re leaving school \$50,000 in debt. It’s like having a mortgage when you leave. So you’ve got to pay off your school debt before you start thinking about a house or car to stimulate the economy. It’s pretty scary for those young people to start out in life with a debt load like that.

The Liberals are proposing a deficit review committee—wow—that will report after the next election: “So we’ll let you worry about it and we’ll talk about it after.” Voters, you shouldn’t be writing them a blank cheque on this. You should bring them to task now before the election and during the election. Nor should they accept a review after the election. Ontarians have the right to all of the correct financial information before the election. And what I mean by that is that if you look at recent hydro costs—and they’re escalating. The government says, “We’re giving you a 10% rebate.” They didn’t tell you that in the next four years it’s going up 46%, and what they didn’t tell you after that is, on the Samsung deal, it could go up as high as 60%.

When we asked about the financial aspects of the Samsung deal, this government—I believe we’re part of the government; we’re not the governing body but we are part of this House and this government. We asked for information about the financial impact on Ontarians, and they said, “If you want information, you’ve got to file for freedom of information.” Can you imagine that? We’re part of the government and we had to pay to get freedom of information to find out what was in the deal, and then

when we did that, they sent us all a copy of the deal, and most of it was blacked out. All of the financial deal was blacked out, so we can't even tell our constituents what's going on. And I'll tell you why: because there's an election coming up. If those details came out before the election, it would bury them. They'd be embarrassed to show you what's in that deal and how much it's going to cost individual hydro payers in this province.

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They won't release it because they're afraid to, yet they yell every day—I sit and watch them yell, every day—at the opposition, “Where's your plan?” I say, “Show us yours and show us all of it. Don't show us part of it. We want to know your whole plan, too.” But when you black out documents, that's a little bit—I don't know—suspicious. It's a little bit secretive. It's a little bit spy-ish. I really have a problem with that. We are the sitting government. Whether we're in opposition or not, we have a right to information, and if they're going to withhold information, it really doesn't tell the taxpayers that they're accountable.

The Liberals are proposing a new risk management program for farmers, but farmers, farm families, have been waiting for real help for nearly a decade. We need to implement a program to ensure that we keep family farms and encourage their sustainability.

The Liberals are promising more breast cancer screening but they don't mention the clinics in London that were closed or how they forced breast cancer patients to fight for treatment, nor do they address the complete lack of breast cancer facilities for patients in the north.

On jobs, the Liberals tout their well-oiled statistics to say that their job plan is working, but this isn't working. That really bothers me, too: their well-oiled job creation program. Well, I don't know. That oil dried up in Hamilton, where I'm from, because since 2007 we've lost 20,000 manufacturing jobs, and they haven't come back. What has come back are \$11- to \$14-an-hour jobs. These jobs that were gone were \$20- to \$30-an-hour jobs. They say they want to boom the economy, that they want to stimulate the economy. You don't do it with \$11-an-hour jobs, because they're barely getting by and can barely pay their hydro bills. They're not going to buy a new car, a stove, a fridge, a big-screen TV. They're not going to do it because they can't afford it. As I've stated in this House more than once in the four years, 20% of the people in my riding are living below the poverty level—20%. That's huge. They won't be buying big cars and big houses and screens on the money they make, or don't make, because they're unemployed.

Ontario is lagging behind most provinces in recovering the jobs lost during the recession. They boasted 600,000 jobs. I've been hearing that for a couple of years too. Now it's down to 500,000, and dropping. Once again, a Liberal promise, Liberal statistics, and we're doing the old shuffle. We're going backwards. It's, “Oops, we over-thought...” And the 50,000 green venture jobs: I'd like to know where they are. I haven't seen any of those either.

The government's own estimates show that they are projecting 60,000 fewer jobs than previously expected, and their revised 2011 job creation numbers moved downward from 139,000 to 116,000, from 155,000 to 118,000 in 2012. I'm beginning to think that that trend will continue, and before we know it those 600,000 jobs will be less than 50,000 jobs they've created, so there will still be 550,000 people out of work.

Narrowly targeted tax credits for training, innovation and investments will create jobs. Do you really believe—I heard the member stand up and say, “You're getting a \$50 tax credit for extracurricular activities.” Give me a break. Fifty dollars a year? I can't even sharpen my skates 10 times for that, and that's for one person. Fifty bucks? If you break that down over a year, I'd be lucky if I could get a Tim Hortons coffee once a month. It's ridiculous. To be touting numbers like that is a joke.

The government has confirmed its corporate tax schedule. Between this year and next the government is wasting another \$400 million on corporate tax giveaways, the ongoing snub to everyday Ontarians who desperately need tax breaks. The government has confirmed its corporate tax schedule. Between this year and the next the government is wasting another \$400 million on corporate tax giveaways. You know what? They're giving hundreds of millions of dollars to these companies who are supposed to create jobs for Ontario, yet these companies take the money and go south. They stay for a year or so, make it look good, then they head south. It's happening all over Ontario. They invest it somewhere else. Our hard-earned tax money that's supposed to create jobs in Ontario and keep companies here so they will hire Ontarians isn't happening. They're heading south and taking our money with them.

What bank would lend money to people with no strings attached? You've got to have equity. You've got to have the ability to pay. You've got to have a job that pays well enough to pay the bank back. These guys throw it around like it's butter with no strings attached. “Here's \$400 million. Here's \$500 million.” And these companies head out.

Expenditure management: The budget states that expenses are lower than previously estimated, meant to demonstrate their ability to manage. Well, I'll tell you one thing: If I owned a company and, when I started as the manager of that company, I had a \$5-billion deficit, and four years later I had a \$20-billion deficit, chances are I'd be fired. Chances are I'd be kicked out. But in this government, even if I was kicked out, I'd be walking away with a nice severance, a big buyout. And some of these severances of the CEOs exceed their yearly wage—unbelievable.

The Liberals claim to have identified \$1.5 billion over three years in expense reductions. Well, that's interesting. I remember the health scandal. I asked them on one committee, “You spent \$385 million creating a health card: administration costs, software, hardware,” and I asked for the numbers on that. “What was it spent on? What did we get for our money?” They wouldn't tell me.

The government wouldn't tell, again. They talk about accountability. So we had to go through freedom of information; we went through it again.

When it came back to me, I asked, "What did we get for that \$388 million?"

They said, "Well, you got \$100 million worth of programs, hardware, software etc."

I said, "Where did the other \$288 million go?"

"Consultants."

Sixty-six per cent of that budget went to consultants in four or five years—and buyouts and switching consultants and all the things they do.

That's one ministry. There are 22 large ministries. If they wasted over \$200 million on that, I don't even want to begin to think what they wasted at the other 21 ministries. And I let the people of Ontario know that this government is indirectly or directly involved with another 200-and-something agencies, tribunals, boards and school boards—you name it. There's even more, but they're not going to have them do an audit. I think I'd be safe to say there's billions wasted around here a year.

What could Paul Miller do with \$1 billion in Hamilton? I could feed all those people, the 20% that don't have decent meals. I could probably put a lot of people back to work. I could do a lot in Hamilton with \$1 billion—not happening. They'd rather give it to friendly consultants. And that's one ministry. That's scary.

They're cutting the OPS by 1,500 positions between April 2012 and May 2014, in addition to the jobs lost through the move to the HST. They say they'll be asking ministries to look at attrition etc. to accomplish their target.

They're going to review the ServiceOntario model, including examining public-private partnerships.

Reducing the funding envelope for executive offices of hospitals and universities etc: That could mean executive salaries, but it's up to the organizations. What does that mean, "It's up to the organizations"? How can they claim they're going to reduce it when they leave it up to the organizations to make the decision? Do you think anybody is going to make a decision to take money out of their own pocket? I don't think so.

They're closing older, underutilized jails in Owen Sound, Walkerton and Toronto. They are cancelling the construction of the Toronto west courthouse, in Etobicoke, which was announced in 2009, to save \$180 million.

They're naming Don Drummond to lead the new commission on the reform of Ontario public services. Expect a report back from the government agencies on the progress on the wage freeze in early May. All our available indications are that the wage freeze didn't work. It didn't work. But it's hard to take those promises seriously when in executive offices, the McGuinty Liberals are letting hospital CEO salaries and severances skyrocket well into the six figures.

Cancelling the Toronto courthouse: Is this a well-thought-out, reasonable or good idea given the fact that Ontario's court backlog poses a real threat to our justice

system? Obviously, if the time runs out when someone is supposed to go for a hearing or go to court for their sentencing, and they've run out of time and then they release them, put them back on the street, it's like a slap on the hand: "Go get 'em, fellas. You can do it again."

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ServiceOntario privatization: How can they trick themselves, let alone the public, into believing that the privatization of public services is going to save money? I don't think so. History shows us that it costs people more. I don't know any company that's in it for their shareholders that is not going to try to make money on the backs of the people of Ontario. They're going to try to make money, and it isn't cheaper; trust me.

I'm also concerned about the privacy implications of handing sensitive information to the for-profit sector, especially those with corporate ties to the US, where our privacy laws mean absolutely nothing. Our laws mean nothing to these people. Look at US Steel in Hamilton. They have snubbed their nose at the federal and provincial governments. They do what they want. They don't listen to our labour laws. They don't listen to our corporate laws. They don't listen to our contractual laws. They just say, "We don't care. Take us to court for five years and fine us. Good luck."

I saw the economic development minister stand up here and brag about the \$45 million they gave to Mittal, formerly Dofasco, in Hamilton—nothing for the closed US Steel place where all the guys are locked out, but for a company that is very wealthy and owned by one of the richest men in the world. Do you know that the \$45 million that Minister Papatello was bragging about, that she gave to them for one department in Dofasco that they said was going to create jobs—all Dofasco is doing is moving employees that they might have had to lay off over to fill those positions? That's what's going to happen. There will be no job creation. The \$45 million? Do you know that this guy spent more on his daughter's wedding? So I don't really think he needed it. There's another foreign corporation taking good Ontario tax dollars, and that's like chump change to this guy.

The Don Drummond panel makes me suspicious when a process starts right before an election. Isn't that interesting: a panel starting right before an election that will report back in 2012. Why don't you report back before October? Why are we waiting until 2012? Nice time to name: Make it look you're doing something, how you're going to fix it, and then wait until after the election.

Since the 2009 budget, we've been calling for a deficit reduction that puts families first. Instead, the government's handing out billions in corporate tax cuts and letting hospital CEO salaries skyrocket. The Ontario fiscal framework, as seen by this Liberal government, shows deficit projections in 2011-12 of \$16.7 billion, in 2012-13 of \$15.2 billion and in 2013-14 of \$13.3 billion. This is the very government that, when I first came here four years ago, stood up and chastised the official opposition for leaving them with a \$5-billion debt. Well, we're at \$20 billion and climbing. Don't throw rocks when you

live in a glass house. They suggest that the budget will be balanced in 2017-18, at which time an additional \$50 billion in debt will be rolled up.

Since the 2010 budget, we've been calling for a deficit reduction that puts families first. Instead, this government is handing out billions in corporate tax cuts and letting hospital CEOs run away with our tax dollars, all at the expense of hard-working, job-seeking Ontarians.

The Liberal promises go on and on. If I remember, I think to date they've broken about 112 election promises in the last seven years. So I'm telling the people of Ontario: Take a good, hard look at this government, because they certainly aren't doing you justice.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It's a pleasure to have an opportunity to respond to the member from Hamilton East. This is known as question and answer period, so I'm just going to ask him a few questions on some omissions—actually, it's called comments and questions. Instead of commenting on the remarks that he made, I just want to ask a few quick questions, and maybe he can answer them in his reply.

Where is the NDP plan? We've asked for the NDP plan and we don't have one yet. Would the NDP have opened up collective agreements like they did before? Would the NDP do what others suggested, and when GM and Chrysler were in trouble, would they have not given them money and closed them down? We gave them money and they stayed in operation, and that money was in the form of loans.

Would the NDP cut and slash and burn other programs—health care and education, for example—which would destroy one of Ontario's proudest traditions? We made a decision to fix, protect and continue with health care and education.

We created an environment to attract new employment and to have it invest here. We focused on health care and education, because if you've got good health care and good education, companies will come here, and they are coming here. I don't have enough time to list them all. It's not just Samsung; there are many others that have come here.

We did not sell assets. Would the NDP have sold assets, like the 407? I'd like to know that answer.

We have made a decision—and this decision was made not just last year or the year before; it was made way back in 2003—to strengthen health care and to strengthen education. We stayed the course, and we did it—and this was not mentioned at all—during the biggest recession since the 1930s. We overcame it and focused on building our province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, as I said before, speaks passionately and, I believe, is quite well informed on the constituents he represents.

I think it's important, because he was standing up for working families, that he be aware of this: If you check

on page 226 of the budget for 2011-12—that's the fiscal year we're talking about—for 2010-11 it's \$106 billion and it's going up to \$108 billion, and that's on the revenue side. If you look at it, the largest increase in revenue is in personal income tax; it's going from \$23 billion to \$25 billion. There's the \$2 billion more: It's coming from taxes, from your pocket. There it is; I'm reading it from the document.

The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek should pay very close attention to the fact that the spending is a function of taxation. If the taxation doesn't come up as forecast, then you have a larger deficit. I put to you, and the member from Hamilton East should probably look into this in his response: I believe that the deficit will be larger next year, not smaller.

How many times can the people of Ontario take this? I think it's worthy of reflection. It is time for change; there's no question about it. Have some respect for the families, not just in Hamilton but in Durham. In fact, our leader, Tim Hudak, almost every day says, "Have some respect for the families of Ontario." They have hit the wall, and this government seems to not care. I don't like to accuse them of being heartless, but often the truth is in the observations. If it appears to you they are, then perhaps, in your case, they are insensitive.

Somehow, the Premier has lost his way. I have lost faith myself, and I believe—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I was listening to my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and his rather interesting comments. He did mention that the speech certainly did not mention poverty. It was one of the promises in the 2007 election, that we were going to have a poverty reduction strategy, that we were going to be serious about it, and here we are, with a new speech that doesn't even mention it.

He did talk about it, because in his riding, like in many other ridings in Ontario—he mentioned that 20% of the population in his riding lives in poverty. I would tell you that the numbers are similar if you go throughout many of the ridings in Ontario. Poverty has a gender: It is mainly women and children who live in poverty. Children were supposed to be the targets of the poverty reduction strategy, but it has fallen completely off the radar, to the point where we don't hear about it at all.

He talked about the need to improve pensions, either the pensions of people who are lucky enough to have one, or for the 75% or so of Ontarians who don't have a pension at all. Why didn't we start to take steps forward so that as the baby boomers go and as the new generation prepares for retirement, we start to see a plan?

This budget certainly was not visionary. It has not given us a pathway as to where we would like to take Ontario into the future. It was very limited and long on rhetoric.

1650

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Johnson: It's a pleasure to stand up again to speak to this bill, our budget bill. I thank the members from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Scarborough Southwest, Durham and Nickel Belt for their comments.

Obviously when we get into a budget debate, there are different opinions around the room. I think ultimately we all want to get to the same place; it's just a question of how we get there. We've all gone through a worldwide recession. Decisions were made to keep people working. We partnered with the federal government, as all the other provinces did in this country. The fact of investing money into our economy was a decision that was made to keep people working. We decided to do that because the more people that are working, the more people that are paying into the system rather than drawing out of the system.

I'm very happy with the supports that have been put in place in this budget. The risk management program is going to be huge in rural Ontario. We have had comments made where people are referring to it as the biggest step forward in over 50 years.

Support for children's mental health: In rural Ontario this is huge, because of the partnerships that will exist between the Ministries of Health, Children and Youth Services and Education for delivering models looking at that. This ties into the early identification that we're going to see through the full-day learning programs which are going to be in place. It's a great step forward. I'm thrilled that that was there.

We look at different ways that people are dealing with budgets around the world. There was a lot of speculation about what this government would do. It's very clear in the budget document what we're planning to do. There are no tax increases in there. In Nova Scotia earlier this year the NDP government raised their HST by two percentage points while reducing it on some articles. In England we've seen a good example of what happens with the Conservatives, where they've raised the value-added tax a great deal to cover their expenses.

I appreciate the chance to comment.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to respond to the member from Scarborough Southwest. He said, "What's the NDP plan?" Well, the NDP plan was, first of all, to cut the HST off heating oil and hydro. In the last four years—I don't know if the member's noticed—we've had bills on the floor to stimulate the economy; for example, a 10% manufacturing credit for business. We had a bill for Buy Ontario shot down by the Liberals. The other bill shot down by the Liberals: 50% Canadian content of railway cars, whatever is manufactured in Ontario, where 50% of the work is done here; not just a warehouse to distribute it but the work's actually done here.

Then he talks about, what are our problems with the financial aspect of it? Well, there's your Samsung deal. He mentioned the Samsung deal. There's a deal that's going to escalate hydro. We asked for the information on

that so we could do a good dialogue on the content of that deal with Samsung. We had to go through freedom of information to get it, and when we got it, most of it was blacked out. In fact, all the financial details were blacked out. So if this government is so proud of their record, why did they black out the entire deal so we can't read it and analyze it? It tells me it's not such a good deal. Estimates say that your hydro will go up 60%, and they gave you a 10% rebate. It doesn't quite cut it; you're still down 50% in about six years. You're going to pay 50% more for your hydro.

They talk about the HST. I've heard several members across there talk about Nova Scotia and HST. Well, really, there isn't a lot of industry in Nova Scotia. They had fishing. They had forestry. They had some things. They don't have the industrial base Ontario has. They don't have the population we have. They're nowhere near us. Naturally, they've got to get the taxes from somewhere, so they were forced to raise the HST because they have no income to run their government. They don't have 13 million people, the last time I counted, in New Brunswick or Nova Scotia. They keep comparing that. It's ridiculous—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to have 10 minutes today to speak on this budget motion. I'll mention at the beginning that I'll be sharing my time with the member from Peterborough.

One of the things that I've heard being chronically and systematically criticized in this House by the NDP over the course of the last two or three years has been our commitment to lower business taxes in the province of Ontario. This budget maintained that commitment. The corporate tax reductions, of course, are now getting some play, some louder noise than the other business tax reductions. It's important to note that over the course of the last two to three years, we have systemically, on a regular basis, been lowering the cost of doing business in the province of Ontario to lead to investment and job creation: HST, lower business education tax rates, lowering the small business tax threshold, the elimination of capital tax, and the reduction in corporate tax rates. So there is a whole program in place—not just corporate tax rates—that we have embarked upon to ensure that as we come through the greatest recession since the Great Depression, Ontario will be viewed as a jurisdiction that business investment will view favourably.

It's not lost on anybody in this Legislature, I am sure, that when jobs are lost through no fault of anyone's, business investment then begins to look to where it is that they will reinvest to create employment and investment in given jurisdictions.

I want to focus a little bit on the corporate tax reductions, though, because that's the part that gets criticized on a regular basis primarily by the NDP.

In northern Ontario, there is a development right now that is commonly being referred to as the Ring of Fire. That find in northern Ontario is a chromite deposit that is

said to be the richest on the planet. I'm hesitant to quote a number, but I'm told that that deposit has an 80- to 100-year mine life. It is that incredibly rich. The mine is going to occur where it will occur, and then the smelting operations—the company, Cliffs resources, is currently spending some time determining where it is that smelting processing operation is going to occur. There's a lot of discussion, a lot of jockeying amongst different communities in Ontario and, I am sure, amongst other provinces, in terms of lobbying and sitting down with Cliffs to try to entice them to process that ore body within their jurisdiction. The job creation that will flow from the processing component of that mining operation is going to be enormous: Some are saying as many as 500 or more jobs once the plant is constructed. The original cost of the construction of the plant—I'm not sure how many construction jobs would be associated with that, but it would be significant.

My point is this: While the NDP, on a consistent basis, want to criticize corporate tax reductions, I think it might be worth their time if they would pick up the phone and ask Cliffs resources what it is they consider when they choose a jurisdiction in which they will place their processing facility for the chromite deposit that is called the Ring of Fire.

As you know, it's primarily the NDP and, unfortunately, even a bit more lately, the Conservatives who want to harp on electricity pricing as having been responsible for the loss of jobs in the forestry industry. I've spoken at length in here and I've said what a ridiculous argument it is that the NDP have put forward. I look forward to spending more time on that in the coming months and especially in the election, to just blow that argument out of the water, and I've spent some of the time doing that here. Electricity pricing is something that they will consider, but so are labour costs and so are tax costs.

If you're serious about seeing job creation occur in the province of Ontario, you have to understand that while sometimes we all have difficult times with large corporations—I've spent some time in meetings with them where there are things you probably prefer to say that you can't. But at the end of the day, the NDP seems unwilling to acknowledge that they still are the people, in many instances, who provide a lot of employment. While all of us, from time to time, don't particularly enjoy our meetings with large corporations, they are large employers and we all want them to locate in the province of Ontario so that they can provide investment and jobs.

While the NDP, it seems, are opposed ideologically to any kind of business tax cut, I would expect them to understand that Cliffs resources, who are considering locating a major processing facility in Ontario, will be very interested in what the corporate tax rates in Ontario are and how those corporate tax rates compare to other provinces, especially Manitoba and Quebec, our neighbouring provinces. I would think they might spend a little time considering that.

1700

Contained within the budget was one more exhibition of our government's commitment to northern Ontario,

and that is, of course, the \$10-million increment that was included for the northern Ontario heritage fund program. This program gets referenced a lot in this Legislature, and I think, quite frankly, it gets taken for granted. The job creation and retention that has occurred in northern Ontario in the last seven years under this program is somewhere in the order of 15,000 jobs. When we formed government in 2003, that program had morphed into a public sector infrastructure program, and I was pleased that the minister of the day, Rick Bartolucci, asked me to undertake a study to review that program. We brought back a report that was adopted, and the program shifted back to its original mandate, which was away from public infrastructure—we retained one public infrastructure program—back to supporting and creating private sector jobs. That program is doing it, as I just mentioned, to the tune of about 15,000 retained or created jobs over the last six years or so.

Why is that \$10 million important? In 2007, we committed to increasing the fund, which was annually at \$60 million a year, by \$10 million per year every year for four consecutive years. This is the fourth year of that commitment. So we went from \$60 million to \$70 million, from \$70 million to \$80 million, from \$80 million to \$90 million, and now \$90 million to \$100 million—this year, \$40 million more than four years ago, last year \$30 million more than three years ago, the year before that \$20 million more. Now we will have spent \$100 million more in the last four years out of the northern Ontario heritage fund than was previously the case. That's on top of the \$60 million a year. Four years times \$60 million would have been \$240 million in northern Ontario. Our increases in commitment have meant that \$240 million is actually \$340 million. If people are looking for a commitment to northern Ontario, I would say that one example is clear and concise in terms of our government's commitment to northern Ontario.

I'll even make the point a bit more concise and compare our approach to the northern Ontario heritage fund, as we came out of the greatest recession since the Great Depression, to the approach that was taken by the NDP when they went through a milder recession in the early 1990s. What did they do with the northern Ontario heritage fund? Sixty million dollars, around 1993 or 1994, a fund only there to support northern Ontario—the NDP took all \$60 million of it out, 100%, and put it into general revenue. Our approach, as a Liberal government, with a much deeper recession and the pressure on budgets significant and severe, is slightly different. It would have been easy to roll over that program and bring it back into general revenue. Not only didn't we do that, like the NDP did in the early 1990s; we increased it. So we didn't take it out; we increased it from \$60 million to \$70 million, from \$70 million to \$80 million, from \$80 million to \$90 million, and now up to \$100 million, as I've said.

This was not a budget that sprinkled little bits of money and programs and new spending around the province. Some of the press releases that went out after the budget tried to say there was nothing for northern On-

tario. There really was nothing in this budget that spoke to specific geographic regions of the province, but this \$10-million commitment, the fourth of a four-year commitment of an extra \$10 million per year up to \$100 million, clearly spoke to that. I think it's extremely important that I highlight that.

My time is almost up. I only have 10 minutes today. I want to quickly acknowledge our commitment on the breast screening program and the expansion of that program. As people have heard in the Legislature, contained within this budget document is \$15 million of funding over three years that will provide upwards of 90,000 more exams, lowering the age of eligibility for a breast screening exam from 50 down to 30 years old for those people at risk. So it's a very significant enhancement.

There's a run in Thunder Bay, the CIBC Run for the Cure, that I participate in every year. I know those people will be extremely gratified and happy to hear about this as well.

My time is up. I wish I had more time, but I yield the floor to my colleague from Peterborough.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's really a pleasure for me to enter the discussion this afternoon about the budget. I want to start by quoting from two documents. One is from the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters; it's dated February 1, 2011. It was presented by Ian Howcroft and Paul Clipsham. They made a presentation to the Ontario Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. They say it well. I just want to quote from their report. They said:

"We continue to emerge from a deep and protracted recession. Manufacturers and exporters have been impacted significantly. But there are signs of greater optimism for the sector going forward. In fact, CME's forecast for the coming year is that manufacturing investment and exports will outpace GDP growth in 2011. In fact, Canada will rely on exports and business investment to sustain economic recovery. Export volumes are expected to expand 10% and machinery and equipment investments will increase by 16.5%. Ontario"—and I quote—"is once again leading the economic charge based primarily on the resiliency of our industrial and manufacturing base. Companies are adapting to rapidly changing circumstances. They are taking the necessary steps to survive and thrive in the new global reality."

"Credit for the recovery is also owing to the Ontario government taking bold steps to address the challenges that are impacting manufacturers and exporters. In particular, CME strongly supports the HST, corporate tax rate reductions, the Smart program, significant infrastructure investments and measures to encourage skills training and development."

To quote now from a group that you would think would be directly opposite to this, I want to quote from the CAW Canada Ontario pre-budget submission of February 1, 2011, made by a very distinguished labour leader in Canada, Ken Lewenza, who is their national president.

"We offer our comments and suggestions in a constructive, non-partisan spirit. We recognize the difficult and competing pressures which the current Ontario government is attempting to balance, and while we do not endorse every decision this government has made, we do wish to commend the positive initiatives that have been taken in numerous areas...." I'll quote just a couple: "extensive support for the automotive industry and manufacturing in general" and "positive environmental initiatives (including the Green Energy Act and its made-in-Ontario manufacturing strategy)."

They go on, on page 3: "The Ontario government's participation in the 2009 joint US-Canada-Ontario rescue of GM and Chrysler has already proven to be one of the most effective investments of taxpayer dollars in" Ontario "history. The companies were saved from liquidation—which would have cost Ontario's economy an estimated \$40-60 billion in GDP (and cost the provincial government, not incidentally, \$4 billion in annual fiscal damage). The joint government actions preserved in excess of 20,000 direct" high-paying "jobs (and resulting tax revenues), and tens of thousands of indirect spin-off jobs. The federal government estimates the rescue" alone, across Canada, "saved 51,000 jobs in total."

I think it's important that we get those comments on the record, both from the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters association and the CAW.

In particular, in my riding of Peterborough, General Motors represents about 25% of the local economy. That's made up of retired GM employees. Through our rescue package, we saved their hard-earned pensions. It covers the active employees at General Motors in my riding, and it has also protected a number of the businesses that are part of the GM-in-Oshawa supply chain.

I know there were members opposite, of course, who didn't support that rescue, and perhaps this fall they'll answer questions to their constituents about why they were prepared to jeopardize \$60 billion in Ontario GDP by not supporting that rescue package.

I'd also like to quote one of the things that's very important to my riding, on page 128. It is the commitment of the Ontario government to extend the 407 east from Brock Road in Pickering to Highway 35/115. I was absolutely shocked that we wouldn't have gotten more support on this announcement from the member from Durham and the member from Whitby—Oshawa.

1710

This certainly contrasts—if you'll just bear with me for a moment—a statement that was made by the five federal members of Parliament in the area. Give me a moment here, and I'll find it. It was a memorandum that was signed by five federal members that are impacted by the 407: the Honourable Jim Flaherty, member of Parliament from Whitby—Oshawa; the honourable Colin Carrie, member of Parliament for Oshawa; the honourable Barry Devolin, the member of Parliament for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock; the famous Bev Oda, the member of Parliament for Durham; and last, but not least, the honourable Dean Del Mastro, member of Parliament for

Peterborough. I want to quote the joint communiqué that they issued on March 11, 2011.

“Statement on the 407 Announcement.

“The members of Parliament impacted by the extension of Highway 407 to Highway 35/115 acknowledged the provincial government’s announcement today. While not perfect, this is a positive development and victory”—I repeat, “and victory”—“for our communities.”

They go on to say in this communiqué, and I certainly support what they have here, “We now have agreement that the work will proceed as a continuous build over the next several years. We will see the completion of the extension to Harmony Road by 2015, followed by the completion of the Durham link between Highways 401 and the 407 and the connection to Taunton Road by 2017, and finished by the eastward extension to Highway 35/115 by 2020.”

As I’ve said, that’s been endorsed by several very distinguished members of the federal Parliament, including federal Finance Minister Flaherty, Colin Carrie, Barry Devolin, Bev Oda and Dean Del Mastro. I really want to thank them for their endorsement of our provincial announcement. That’s good news for everybody involved.

In the budget last Tuesday, something that is widely supported is the risk management model that’s been developed now for the cattle, pork, sheep, grains and oil seeds, and fruit and vegetables. There was this big statement that someone else was taking credit for this, and it got quite a chuckle from the farm community in my riding. In fact, let’s get on the record who developed this model.

Exactly two years ago, a group of cattle farmers came together in my riding and I’ll name them today: Mr. Edgar Cornish, Mr. Sam Wood, Mr. Jack Holland, Mr. John Lunn, Mr. Wayne Telford and Mr. Allan Kidd. They developed the risk management model for the cattle industry in the province of Ontario. Those gentlemen travelled to every respective cattlemen’s association across Ontario so they could explain the model that they developed and, indeed, garner their support to make that a reality, which was reflected in last Tuesday’s budget.

You know, it’s interesting. They were joking to me, “Well, we heard about the member from Oxford.” I said, “Yeah, we remember the member from Oxford.” When he was the ag minister, he closed the agricultural office in the riding of Peterborough, and he was better known for the famous scandal that occurred at Agricorp during his period of time.

When you look through this budget, I was pleased that Tony Tilly, the president of Fleming College, was in the audience last Tuesday. He’s very supportive of the 60,000 additional spaces that will be created through this budget that’s laid out in this plan. Bonnie Patterson, the former president of Trent University, who’s now a head of the umbrella organization for universities of the province of Ontario—very distinguished individual in the university field—also acknowledges the work that’s being done through these 60,000 additional spaces that will be very helpful.

We continue, through the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, to support family health teams. In 2004, there were 27,000 people in Peterborough riding without access to primary care. This past spring, I’m pleased to report there’s 1,500 people left: 27,000 down to 1,500 left that don’t have access to primary care. In fact, the Peterborough health team models, five of them, which are supported by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, were the topic of a CTV story back on Sunday, April 3—just in the last few days.

A very extensive report has been prepared by a number of doctors in Peterborough: Walter Rosser, Jack Colwill, Jan Kasperski and Dr. Lynn Wilson, who put together Progress of Ontario’s Family Health Team Model: A Patient-Centred Medical Home. They go on to talk about the success of family health teams in the province of Ontario. They note in this document that it was an initiative of this government that started family health teams to be implemented right across—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan spoke about the importance of funds being allocated in the budget for advanced and improved breast screening processes, and certainly we agree with that. We supported the private member’s bill that was brought forward by the member from Sault Ste. Marie. I think that’s something that all parties in this Legislature agreed to. That, in itself, is a good thing.

The problem is that there are very mixed signals coming from this government with respect to that whole issue. One is the fact that there has recently been notice about the closing of a really valuable breast screening program in London, Ontario. Maybe some of the new funds can be used to save that clinic because I understand it was considered to be very important in London.

Secondly, we have the problem of what you do with the screening results once you have them. We saw that most recently in this Legislature where a young woman who did all of the right things and had herself screened was found to have a breast tumour and wasn’t able to get the medication she needed. She didn’t have access to Herceptin, and it was really only after there was a huge public outcry that the government finally backed down. Thankfully, they are going to be providing this much-needed medication to Ms. Anzarut.

With respect to those comments, I think we still have to remember that there are still many issues that are outstanding surrounding that.

With respect to the comments made by the member from Peterborough on the Highway 407 east extension, sure, the federal members did say that it was basically better than nothing, which is pretty much what we had before. We had a broken promise to complete the extension by 2013, and we had no end date in sight. So certainly, a promise now to complete it by 2020 is good, but it’s not better—before we had an end date of 2013. We have something now seven years later. Is that great? No, it’s not wonderful, but it’s better than what we had. I

guess that's the most we can say about it, but we'll continue to advocate for faster completion. It's important for all of Durham region and Peterborough too.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was rather interesting to listen to the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan when we talked about Cliffs resources. He kept saying, "The NDP is saying this about energy prices," and "The NDP is saying that."

All we're saying is, go to Cliffs resources' website, click on page 2, and you will see, in full colour, the base case. I'm happy to report the base case is in my riding, in Capreol; I'm really happy, and this is the base case. But it also says there, in full colour with a bar chart, that at present electricity prices, no jurisdiction in Ontario is feasible.

I'm not saying that; I'm not saying anything. I'm telling the member to go see what Cliffs resources is saying. Cliffs resources is saying that with the electricity prices in Ontario, it doesn't matter where the base case is located, it doesn't matter which one of the mayors fight with one another to have their processing plant in their riding or in their town or township; no geographical location within Ontario will be considered at the present electricity price. I encourage everybody to go to cliffsresources.com and click on page 2, full colour for everybody to see. It's not the NDP that's saying that the electricity is too expensive for Cliffs resources to settle in Ontario; it is Cliffs resources that is saying it. So I invite everybody to go check what the member had to say.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's a pleasure to rise in this House and to speak on budget 2011. When you look at this budget, which was presented to the House by the Minister of Finance last Tuesday, you see that this budget is a prudent budget, it's a well-balanced budget, and it also reflects the values of the Ontario Liberal Party and also it reflects the vision of this Premier, Premier Dalton McGuinty.

Again, as I said, it's a prudent budget. In this budget, the government is investing in essential services, in education, in health care, in infrastructure, in social services. In the meantime, the budget predicts that our deficit will be down by \$3 billion.

1720

In the area of education, major investment is going to occur, according to this budget: 60,000 new spots are going to be created in our universities and colleges. The attainment rate of our students in universities and colleges was 56% in 2003 and now is 64%; it's going to rise to 70%. We all know that education is important to the success of our young people and, accordingly, to the success of our economy in the long term.

Also in this budget, we are introducing full-day kindergarten. Kids four years and five years old can go to kindergarten, or to school, basically, and they'll learn, and their parents don't need to pay a single cent.

According to this budget, kindergarten education has become a part of public education like elementary education and secondary education. Now we've added another category of education to elementary and public education. This follows the philosophy that education really starts at the time when a child is born, not at the age of six or seven. We have reduced that age to four.

On the side of—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I think that one of the things that this budget really hits the right note on is its tax plan for jobs and growth, and some of the tax relief that it gives the families in areas like Mississauga, Brampton, Oakville and all across the 905 belt. For example, personal cuts to taxation mean that for about 93% of Ontarians, on average, their taxes are going to be reduced by about \$200. That's the equivalent of something like all of the HST on something like \$2,600 worth of purchases.

Another measure is the complete elimination of Ontario income tax for about 90,000 low-income taxpayers, and a lot of these are seniors, people on fixed incomes. So even though—and I'll say to them especially now; we're in the beginning of April—you don't have to pay personal income taxes, it's really important that you actually file a tax return because many of the benefits that come to you come from having filed a tax return. So even if you have no income, even if you haven't filed for years, go to one of the free tax clinics. There will be any number of people willing to help you in the early part of April; it's a little harder to get an accountant in the latter part of April. If you file a tax return, you're eligible for a lot of tax credits, which could be money right back in your bank account working for you.

Another measure is sales tax relief for about 3.1 million households through the Ontario sales tax credit. For example, at \$260 a person, that's \$1,040 for a family of four—that's all of the HST on something like \$13,000 worth of purchases not previously subject to tax. That makes a difference. That makes us a more prosperous province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the members from Whitby—Oshawa, Nickel Belt, Richmond Hill and Mississauga—Streetsville.

First, to the member from Nickel Belt: She talked about electricity pricing. I had talked about electricity pricing in the context of it being one input cost for large corporations operating in the province of Ontario. I used it as an analogy and put it beside corporate income tax reductions that any large corporation would consider when they were going to locate or not locate a business in the province of Ontario. Perhaps I didn't make my point clear enough, but unfortunately, the member from Nickel Belt chose not to address her party's opposition, the NDP opposition, to corporate tax reductions in the province of Ontario. That was the point. Electricity is one input cost,

corporate taxation is another input cost. Obviously, any company that is going to locate and make significant investment in a provincial jurisdiction—Ontario—is going to consider corporate taxation rates. Perhaps next time—she’s here by herself today—somebody from the NDP will address their opposition to corporate taxation.

To the member from Whitby–Oshawa, who spoke as well, I thank her for her comments, but I think they may have conveyed a bit of an impression to people who are following the debate that there are reductions coming when it comes to health care in the province of Ontario. What I know is that since I’ve been here in 2003, the province of Ontario has spent \$30 billion, give or take, on health care. Today, in 2011, seven-plus years and counting, that number stands at about \$46 billion.

If you want to phrase that or frame that as a reduction, that’s fine: 10,000 more nurses, 2,900 more doctors—the list goes on and on. I know that many of us have great examples in our own ridings that we can speak to that represent investments in health care. So I just thought I needed to address that comment as well.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I’m pleased to rise to speak on the budget. I’d like to begin my comments with an editorial that actually appeared the day before the budget. I think it puts the budget and any further discussions we have about Ontario’s economy in perspective. It’s “Ontario: Land of Red Ink.”

“From economic engine of Confederation to fiscal basket case, Ontario has come a long way under the tenure of Premier Dalton McGuinty’s Liberal government. It now is saddled with a \$17,000 per-capita debt, and is spending 10 cents on the budget dollar on interest payments.”

We cannot lose track of the fact that we collectively, the Liberal government, have doubled the debt left for future Ontario residents and taxpayers. It amazes me that we don’t begin every discussion talking about how much debt and how much future liability we are leaving for our children, our grandchildren and, quite frankly, our great-grandchildren.

Putting that in perspective, I will begin my discussions, as I did in comments earlier today, on one positive item in the budget. It was unfortunately only two lines, but they are, “We are introducing a comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy.”

“At the outset, our focus will be on children and youth.”

I’m very happy that that’s in there. As I raised earlier today, I would love to have more details on which ministries it’s going to flow through and which services are going to be provided or added to the mix, because it doesn’t take any of us very long to figure out that mental health and addiction services across Ontario are inconsistent. There are wait-lists that are an embarrassment to any of us who have tried to help constituents. We really need some action on that, so I would love to have anyone who can shed some light on what exactly is going to be

coming forward with the mental health and addictions strategy to enlighten all of us. There is no mention of it in the first bill, Bill 173, which is An Act respecting 2011 Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters, but as I say, I’m anxious to see what is coming forward on that side.

I think we need to touch a bit on the magic \$3 billion that suddenly was saved in less than 12 months. Where did that actually come from? How do we have that kind of differentiation of almost \$3 billion? I see that we’ve been able to nail down a bit of some of the details. There’s the \$700-million planned reserve, which is in every budget annually. As long as we don’t have unforeseen circumstances, that, of course, all gets rolled back in. So there’s the first magic billion.

Significantly lower interest charges as a result of lower-than-anticipated interest rates and borrowing requirements: I’m not sure how it could be unanticipated. We have had unusual historic lows in interest—thank goodness, quite frankly, because we’re already using 10 cents of every dollar on interest payments. I can only imagine what that’s going to do to our program spending when interest rates start to increase—and there isn’t an economist who doesn’t believe that they are going to start creeping up.

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Then there’s the \$2.6 billion in program expense savings, accomplished mainly through cost avoidance, unused contingency funds, lower demand for automatic stabilizers like job retraining, extended stimulus funding, and delayed infrastructure investments. Of course, we all understand the delayed infrastructure spending: It’s going to happen. The money is going to flow. There were delays in some of those third, third and third projects that ultimately didn’t get included in last year’s budget. Therefore they’re being rolled over; hardly a savings that I would issue a press release about.

The economic growth figures: I think we’ve had some comments about how they have been magically and significantly revised downward, which will again ultimately affect revenue projections and what program spending is going to be available. Of course, as I talked about earlier, debt interest is going up, so the debt interest projections have been revised upward. Not a good mix: You have less money coming in and you’re spending more in interest charges. It’s a terrible combination if you’re actually trying to provide services and ensure that our important health, education and social services that Ontario governments are expected to provide are going to be there when we need them.

I like the comment about where they’re going to find some of the savings moving forward. The nice one for me is that agencies have been asked to find \$200 million in efficiencies by 2013-14. There’s no explanation as to what direction or what instructions the agencies have been given in order to find those savings, and of course nothing that spells out exactly how or what the expectation is for individual agencies, some being considerably larger than others. How are you spreading that \$200

million across the 600 and some odd agencies, boards and commissions that currently operate under the province of Ontario?

Cut funding for executives at transfer partners—the examples given were hospitals, universities, school boards and government agencies—by 10% over two years. Certainly nothing in the first budget bill—some proposed legislation. How are those 10% savings happening? Again, what is the directive? What is the decision point that you have shared, either in memo form or in legislation or regulation, that is going to force, encourage the 10% funding cut for executives? I, quite frankly, don't know how you would do that because, of course, they all have individual boards of directors that make those decisions. The individual ministries aren't setting executive salaries. Until you start making some very specific and clear instruction to your board members, I don't see how you can accomplish that goal.

Close underutilized jails: That is an interesting one because my caucus colleague from Sarnia heard about it in the budget, as did his community. If you speak to residents in Sarnia, they will tell you that in fact the jail is not underutilized, has been very, very active, very full. I'm wondering where the underutilization comes from unless they're going to do a wholesale release.

Then we move to the full implementation of all-day kindergarten. It's been moved up to 2014 and yet no capital dollars allocated. Now, we all understand that the schools that were chosen by the Minister of Education were chosen based on the fact that they had room. It was going to cost small amounts of money to actually implement those first ones. They were the—what do we like to say?—the low-hanging fruit; they were the easy ones. "There is space in the schools, empty classrooms, so we will decide that those are the schools that we're going to begin with." The easy ones are done.

The Peel public board, which is one of the boards that I represent, has actually said they are not going to implement any additional schools for full-day learning because they don't have the money for it. They're looking at their capital dollars, they're looking at the fact that there is no money flowing through the Ministry of Education, and they're saying, "We're not going to implement this program unless you're prepared to fund it." That, of course, has not happened, and it certainly wasn't laid out in the budget.

The additional parts that I wanted to talk about were consolidating shared services and creating agency clusters.

Consolidation: We've seen a little bit of that with children's aid societies. Of course, children's aid societies generally have been trying, over the last number of years, to implement the many additional roles and responsibilities that the government has been giving them through legislation—again, without any funding dollars attached to them. At this point, those savings are supposed to amount to \$9 million. As my father said, I'll believe it when I see it.

I want to jump down to another interesting thing that fascinated me as we were going through this budget.

There was a line that talked about increasing hospital base funding by 1.5%. This becomes a real issue for me because, as you know, I live in a growth community, in Dufferin-Caledon. Peel has been dealing with some very high population increases, not just in the last five years, but over the last 20 years. When we do increases to base funding, what we essentially do is say, "Everything is okay, and you just need a little more across the board." It's simply not the truth. The hospitals in Peel region, the hospitals in all of the area surrounding the GTA, the 905, are struggling to deal with population numbers that in no way compare to what they were when the hospitals, the children's aid societies, the school boards—it's the entire list of what is provided in terms of programs in the growth areas.

We have been trying to explain to the provincial government that you cannot just do a base funding across the board and say that that is a reasonable approach. If there are parts of the province that are growing at an exponential rate, you must review what services are being provided and ultimately fund them accordingly. It is a huge problem for us in Peel, in Caledon. I know that my colleague from York-Simcoe deals with it on a regular basis. Every time we have these across-the-board increases, it simply puts our agencies, our hospitals and our school boards at another disadvantage, because we're trying to deal with population increases that the dollars that are being suggested simply cannot keep up with.

The other interesting thing I found about Tuesday's budget—I'm relatively new; I've only been a member since 2007, so I've only had three or four budgets to review. Some people called it an election budget. I think there was a lot of blaming going on in this document. I heard a lot of comments saying, "If we weren't here, someone else would do it poorly. Someone else would destroy the province."

There was a lot of finger pointing at the federal government. There are just a few here that I wanted to highlight. The budget has an entire section called "Ontario Needs a Strong Federal Partner." In it, the Liberals call for changes to the EI program; call for more support for skills training programs; attack the federal government for cutting funding to settlement agencies; call for long-term federal commitments to infrastructure, innovation and financial regulations; and call on the federal government—this is the one that I find fascinating—to assume responsibility for inmates serving sentences of over six months. Where does that come from? Ontario has always been responsible for incarceration of a year less a day—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Two years less a day.
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Ms. Sylvia Jones: —two years less a day. Thank you very much. We have had that model for as long as I can recall, and suddenly, when you're looking for more money, you point at the federal government and say, "Well, come and solve it for us"? It seems completely against the grain that you would have a financial problem and you'd point to the federal government and say,

“Solve it.” We’re supposed to be a stand-alone government that can actually solve problems, that can make decisions. Some of them are tough decisions, I will grant you that, but, ultimately, to decide in a budget document that you’re going to get into a fighting match over, “We’re going to go from two years less a day to six months, and we think it’s a good idea here in Ontario, so feds, step up to the post”? I don’t understand it. We have responsibilities in the justice and criminal issues side that we need to accept.

Maybe this shot calling for the federal government to assume responsibility for inmates serving sentences of over six months was, in fact, a pre-emptive strike, and that’s how they’re going to be able to close the three jails, one of them being in Sarnia. I don’t know. I think it’s probably a tad presumptuous to assume that, whoever ends up being in power, the feds will ultimately make that decision because it ended up in an Ontario budget during—oh, that’s right. It’s a federal campaign happening right now. I’m sure—and I’m trying to be kind—that there is nothing to do, with those many points to the federal government, with the fact that we are currently in the midst of a federal election.

It’s interesting because, of course, I was in Stratford listening to the Premier explain that he has no intention of getting involved in the federal election. This was the Friday before the writ was dropped: no intention of getting involved in the federal election. I think his exact words were, “I have enough to do to keep Ontario moving forward”—and then to see, not even four days later in the budget, seven items that they are specifically calling for federal action on. Today, of course, he was making another announcement that had nothing to do with the Ontario government or the Ontario budget, but in fact was wading into the federal debate.

It’s fascinating to me that we have a Premier who says, “I’m not going to get engaged,” and yet in his budget has very clearly decided to throw down the gauntlet in terms of, “These are the proposals and ideas that I would like the federal government to move forward to.” Maybe he reads the polls more closely than we realize and is trying to help someone; hard to say.

Just to recap, I want to go back to the beginning of our comments, and that was, we’re dealing with some very serious financial issues here. We are already dealing with a government that has increased public spending by 70%, and yet in the private sector we’ve seen an increase of 9%. It comes down to an unsustainable model. We cannot continue to increase spending by 70% and expect that a 9% increase in the private sector is going to in any way be able to close that gap.

I worry. I’m concerned about what that means down the road to our children, our grandchildren. I wish we would spend more of our time talking about how we’re going to deal with those deficit numbers and how we’re actually going to have a plan, moving forward, that will ensure future generations of Ontario residents aren’t paying for the new, exciting and, quite frankly in some cases, frivolous ideas that have been coming forward

from this Liberal government in the last seven years. I will leave it at that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I’d like to thank the member from Dufferin–Caledon. She made some good points. However, I touched on a lot of things earlier that weren’t in the budget, like poverty, pensions, jobs, HST relief, the environment, the supposed 600,000 jobs that have now dropped to 500,000 and dropping every year in their predictions, and the 50,000 green venture jobs that aren’t going to happen.

I’d like to touch on some of the other things I’m concerned about. Half of the forest sustainability funds sit in a Toronto bank account. There’s no mention of getting it out to the Ontario businesses that desperately need it.

On the Ring of Fire: It is a no-brainer that the First Nations need to be at the table in any discussions about the Ring of Fire. Every Ring of Fire project needs to bring jobs and resource wealth to the First Nations who live on and from the land.

On the botched energy file: The budget recommitments to 50% of nuclear capacity and has no changes other than to offer some specifics about loan guarantees provided to First Nations for green energy projects. The HST is still applied to home heating and electricity. No change in time-of-use pricing or anything to do with smart meters. It is still a mystery why this government hasn’t moved to rely far less on nuclear, especially in the face of recent catastrophes. There are real problems with the \$1.5-billion smart meter program. There needs to be a fundamental rethink of the entire program, especially the severely flawed time-of-use pricing scheme.

On the environment file, the budget continues to fail Ontarians. There is no support to make environmental action affordable to Ontarians, nothing to stop rising transit fares or help Ontarians reduce their energy use, and no announcement of a replacement of the cancelled home retrofit program. Rising energy rates will hurt Ontarians unless the government makes conservation, energy efficiency and environmental solutions affordable. The government is not yet on track to meet its 2014-20 climate change emission reduction targets also, and there are no measures in this budget to change that at all.

There is so much missing in this budget, I could go on all day.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I’m just going to comment briefly on the comments made by the member from Dufferin–Caledon.

I guess the first question that comes to mind is, where is the Conservative plan? What would they have done if they were in power? Nobody is mentioning a key fact: This budget was put forward, and it’s a budget of growth and continuing to stay on course, whereas the recent economic global recession affected every country in the world. We didn’t shrink back or react with a knee-jerk

reaction. We didn't attack our health care system. We didn't attack our education system. We stayed the course. They were vulnerable and could have easily been the first victim or first casualty of this budget, but they weren't. We continued going forward. We made a decision to protect health care and education.

I just want to know what the Conservatives would have done. Would they have sold off assets? We didn't sell off major assets. They sold off the 407. We didn't sell off our major assets.

We continue to educate our workforce and continue to have a public health care system that strengthens Ontario and attracts new business. That's an important thing to do.

We did inherit a deficit. It has been acknowledged in many other circles outside of this one that there was a deficit. I just don't know what the Conservatives would have done.

We had GM and Chrysler on the verge of closing. We invested in them, and now they're back on their feet again. We invested in full-day kindergarten. Would they have done that? Would they reduce the size of Ontario's public sector? We did that, but it's through an attrition process rather than slash and burn. These are some questions that remain unanswered, and I'm happy to comment today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I just want to compliment the member for Dufferin–Caledon on her presentation this afternoon, which brings us almost to 6 o'clock. I thought her speech was outstanding, and she indicated during the course of her remarks that she has only been here for four years. I thought her remarks conveyed a breadth of knowledge and experience that is extremely impressive and is amongst the best in our caucus. She deserves enormous credit for the work she's done over the last four years, working on behalf of the people of Dufferin–Caledon. I have certainly benefited from the relationship that I've had working with her, because she's one of my neighbours. We've worked on many issues together. I certainly look forward to her service in the Legislature for many, many years to come.

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She and the member for Whitby–Oshawa worked together on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. Certainly, the work they did in that respect, I think, provided the kind of leadership across party lines, reaching across the partisan divide, to ensure that the committee functioned in a way that was unprecedented in the time that I've been in the Legislature, as I observed it. There was great work done by members of all parties, but certainly the leadership was provided by the member for Dufferin–Caledon and the member for Whitby–Oshawa, to show that by working together on an important issue that for many years had not received the attention that it was due, there would be an effort made to bring forward constructive recommendations through the committee process and bring them forward into the Legislature. To

the extent that the government has responded, I think the credit is due to the member for Dufferin–Caledon and the member for Whitby–Oshawa. I would say that the other members on the committee deserve some measure of credit, but certainly the leadership came from this side of the House on that issue, and I think all members understand that.

Once again, congratulations to the member for Dufferin–Caledon for the remarks this afternoon and the outstanding work that she's done on behalf of her constituents for the last three and a half years.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm pleased to have just a couple of minutes as well to respond with some comments to the member from Dufferin–Caledon.

I certainly want to congratulate the minister and his parliamentary assistant, the member from Kitchener–Conestoga, who is here this afternoon in her role, watching and participating in the debate, for the fine work they both did in bringing to this place a budget that responds to the needs of the day.

I want to go to the member who presented for the 20 minutes and agree with her when she opened and said that there were important elements in this budget, which she was pleased to see, in the introduction of a comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy and introducing as such. She made the comment that she would hope there would be more flesh on the bone. I can't help but agree with her, and that's why the Minister of Health, just in the past week or so, indicated that a more comprehensive plan would come forward during the spring of this year. I think we're all anxious to see that happen. I think it's going to be an important, fundamental part of this budget and an important, fundamental part of where we go with children and youth in mental health.

The budget commits to some \$93 million; the funding will grow to \$93 million by 2013–14. That's not far away when one ramps up a strategy in this regard, making sure the money is spent as effectively as possible. So I'm pleased to hear the member speak positively about that element of the budget and pleased to extend my support for that as well.

I'm pleased with other elements of the budget. I could probably use more than the 30 seconds I have left, but I do want to mention the matter of post-secondary spaces. In the minister's speech, he said, "No keen and qualified Ontario student will be turned away for lack of space on our part or lack of money on his or her part." That's a fundamental tenet of post-secondary education as we build towards the next economy and provide opportunities for young people: No keen or interested student will be turned away by lack of money on his or her part, as the case might be.

I'm pleased with a number of elements in this budget, not the least of which are those two.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Dufferin–Caledon has up to two minutes to respond.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thank you for the comments from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Scarborough Southwest, Wellington–Halton Hills—that was very kind, Ted—and Pickering–Scarborough East.

I am happy that there are some comments and that we're all collectively talking about how to improve services in mental health and addictions. I'm pleased that the opposition day motion was accepted and we are going to see a specific plan coming forward in the spring. I hope that plan will have a lot more detail. Two lines in the budget really doesn't give me enough to say "You're on the right track" or "We need to move further."

I will say that that select committee was a very positive experience. And for what it's worth, as a newbie, I think we should be doing a lot more select committees on specific issues. We don't all have the answers. I don't presume to know how we can wrestle that debt and that deficit down. I do know that we have to deal with it. It is simply unfair to keep putting it off to future generations.

I keep my children's photo on my desk, and part of it is because I'm not there to see them every day; part of it is because I want to be reminded that this job that we are all doing is not about us individually; it's about the constituents and the people we are trying to make Ontario better for. The select committee process for me was a very positive one. We did have some very positive discussions that happened on a three-party level. Quite frankly, with some of these issues that just don't have an easy answer, it's a great opportunity to use that collective brain power that we all have and that I'm sure we all wanted to bring here when we were elected.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the opportunity to talk about the budget. The 2011 budget is one of the best, I was told by my constituents.

It will protect the health record that since 2003 we've been able to create, and it will protect the education that since 2003 we were able to create. We know the health sector and also the education sector are really the two most important pieces of our record. We are able to make a stark comparison with the previous government. As you know, before we came to power in 2003, 10,000 nurses were fired by the PC government. I remember a total of 20 hospitals were closed. During the last seven or eight years, we were able to build 18 new hospitals, or additions.

Talking about education, of course, we have full-day kindergarten, which is another tremendous piece on the record of our government. In this 2011 budget we are going to create 60,000 spaces in higher education, and this is very important. As we are moving from the manufacturing economy to the knowledge economy, we need Ontarians—we need their talent, their skill. So with this addition of 60,000 spaces, we are going to be able to compete.

It's no longer like Ontarians compete with Ontarians. We have to compete with the world. We have to compete with countries like India, China, Middle Eastern countries or Brazil, so we need those talents; we need those skills. These 60,000 additional spaces certainly will help that.

There are other worthier, good measures in our 2011 budget. Look at this encouragement of the private sector in partnership with the public sector. We are going to invest \$1.3 billion total in this partnership. Our government is intending to fund \$175 million to get this partnership together.

So you can see this is a budget, this is—you've got something for me?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Yes, you've got to read that, Mr. Chan: "I'm sharing my time with the member from Northumberland–Quinte West."

Hon. Michael Chan: I'm sharing my time with Northumberland–Quinte West.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Good stuff. Keep going.

Hon. Michael Chan: Oh, I should keep going. All right.

Interjection: Lou's not here.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order.

Hon. Michael Chan: That's fine.

So you can see the importance. This is a budget to protect our health. This is a budget to protect our education. Also, this is a budget that will enhance and strengthen our economy. As we are turning the corner, we must move ahead, and with this budget I think we are going to move ahead.

This morning, I had the opportunity, together with my colleague Dr. Helena Jaczek and my other colleague, in my neighbouring riding, Dr. Reza Moridi, and also the MPP from—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Greg Sorbara was there too.

Hon. Michael Chan: Greg Sorbara, yes. He was there. We had this presentation up in Vaughan. It was a fantastic breakfast, a get-together to discuss this 2011 budget. We had a number of panels there. We really entered into a deep discussion of health, education, the child and youth mental situation, and investment in the budget. We are really proud of this budget.

People say that it's an election budget, but it's not really the typical election budget because we are not looking for something small here and there and there like the previous government or like the federal government. We are moving forward, and this is exactly what we intend to do.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): It now being 6 o'clock, I declare that this House stand adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 39th Parliament

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 5 April 2011

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Mardi 5 avril 2011

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Greffière
Deborah Deller



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 5 April 2011

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 5 avril 2011

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Hindu prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HEALTH PROTECTION AND PROMOTION AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION ET LA PROMOTION DE LA SANTÉ

Ms. Smith, on behalf of Ms. Matthews, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 141, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act / Projet de loi 141, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I will be sharing my time this morning with the member from Guelph, but before I hand over to the member from Guelph, I want to send a shout-out to my North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit: Dr. Jim Chirico, who is our medical officer of health, and Monique Lugli, a good friend of mine, who's the executive director. I just commend our medical officer of health and our health unit for all the great work that they do in our community. I know that they support us in a lot of the programming that we've developed over the years. Certainly, they are doing a great job in our community.

Now I hand it over to the member from Guelph.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to be able to begin the third reading debate on Bill 141, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act.

As you will all recall, this legislation was introduced last November with one principal goal in mind: to better protect the health of our people and our communities. It will, if passed, strengthen Ontario's response to serious public health events, such as a pandemic.

The province's experience with pH1N1—which stands for pandemic H1N1, if you wonder what my mysterious little short form is—provided us with opportunities to review what worked well and where we could

improve. That was the impetus behind this particular bill, this legislation.

Local medical officers of health and the province's health providers have been heralded for their responsiveness, collaboration and professionalism during H1N1. I'm pleased with Ontario's response to the H1N1 pandemic, but we need to think about the future because it's not a question of whether we'll face another pandemic; experts tell us it's a question of when. And when there is another pandemic, or another public health emergency, will our province be ready for it? That's what this proposed legislation is all about. It's about making sure Ontario is better coordinated and better prepared for the next major health-related emergency.

There were many challenges and lessons learned during the 2009 pandemic. We believe Dr. Arlene King, Ontario's chief medical officer of health, has identified the best way to move forward in her report on the H1N1 response, which was released last June. Dr. King recommended a strong, centralized approach to public health emergencies, and she suggested that the chief medical officer of health have the authority to direct public health units in real time. We have responded with proposed legislation that would create these new powers for the chief medical officer of health, or CMOH.

The proposed legislation would give the chief medical officer of health enhanced oversight authority and give the CMOH the authority to direct boards of health and local medical officers of health to adopt policies and measures during a future public health emergency to support a coordinated response. The CMOH would only issue directives to boards of health if there is an immediate public health-related risk and a coordinated response is necessary to protect the health of Ontarians. Such directives would initially be enforced for six months, or less if the CMOH so decided.

The proposed amendments would also expand the minister's power to use a public space, on the advice of the CMOH, for public health purposes, such as holding an immunization clinic. It's perhaps important to note here that the existing act already provides the authority to use spaces for isolation units. That came out of SARS. But what we realized with the H1N1 pandemic is that you can need public spaces for purposes other than simply setting up isolation units. For example, what we discovered during the pandemic was that it was necessary to be able to quickly get space set up to hold mass immunization clinics. You can imagine another sort of chemical spill where perhaps the need would be to set up

a public space for some sort of decontamination. So what this bill proposes is that we expand that power to take over public spaces for those sorts of emergency public health needs.

The amendments would also ensure that the appointments of acting medical officers of health are approved by the CMOH and the minister. This would ensure consistency in the process by which permanent MOHs and acting MOHs are appointed and would strengthen the qualifications of our leadership in the province's public health system.

Following second reading of the bill, Bill 141 was referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy. The committee received input both orally and in writing from key stakeholder groups and organizations. These included the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Association of Local Public Health Agencies, the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario and the city of Toronto.

I'm pleased to say that stakeholders who made submissions provided a number of constructive comments on the bill, and we were able to incorporate some of their suggested changes during clause-by-clause consideration of the bill at the standing committee. So the version we have here before us today, at third reading, is slightly different than the one that left here after second reading.

0910

For example, one of the things that the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and ALPHA, the public health association, proposed was that when we talk about the criteria of risk to public health, or some sort of risk, we clarify that we mean "immediate risk" to meet the threshold to issue orders. So, in fact, we have taken that advice and, with the agreement of all three parties, we have clarified that the threshold is immediate risk. That's consistent with other clauses in the act.

We also had some questions by both the Association of Local Public Health Agencies and the city of Toronto around the use of the term "environmental health" in the act. When you're talking about circumstances where there would be cause to issue an order, "environmental health" was one of the things that the original version, as tabled, talked about as a criterion. The stakeholders quite rightly pointed out that in other parts of the Health Protection and Promotion Act, the requirement is "health hazard" and that that's the language which is used elsewhere in the bill and which is already clearly defined, already clearly understood by the public health community. Again, on consent of all three parties, we changed that wording to talk about "health hazards" rather than environmental issues.

At the clause-by-clause examination we also, in response to the submission made by the City of Toronto, made an amendment to the bill around personal liability protection for certain public health workers. This is quite a technical amendment. Currently, section 95 of the Health Protection and Promotion Act, or HPPA, provides protection from personal liability to designated positions and employees of boards of health who are working

under the direction of a medical officer of health and act in good faith—so protection from personal liability when you're working for a board of health. The only problem is that in some cases—the city of Toronto being the one that raised the issue, but we understand that there are some other jurisdictions where the same problem applies—the board of health employees are actually legally employees of the municipality.

We've sorted that out so that the amendment would add the phrase "or of a municipality." So when we're talking about protection for liability, we're talking now about both the direct employees of the boards of health and the people who happen to be formally designated as employees of the municipality. That will assure those people who work on our behalf during a public health emergency, who are following the directives of the local medical officer of health, or indeed the chief medical officer of health, that they are protected from any liability.

There were some suggestions made and some amendments that we did not accept. The one that I particularly wanted to mention that we did not accept and explain why was an amendment that was proposed by the NDP. Again, when we're talking about the criteria, the existing language proposes that if we have a health emergency, either national, international or locally in Ontario, this would apply. There was a proposal to remove "national" and "international," and we said, "No, we don't want to do that." Because you can imagine a situation where, across the border in Buffalo, Niagara Falls, New York or something, there would be some sort of a chemical explosion and the toxic cloud is headed this way. Clearly, the chief medical officer of health would want to have that coordinated response for all the health units, all the areas of the province, where that might end up. That would be an international incident. We think that's appropriate.

You can also imagine an outbreak in Florida during March break, and people returning all over our province from Florida carrying some highly infectious communicable disease. Again, we would want the chief medical officer of health to have a coordinated response all over the province. So we do want the chief medical officer of health to have that authority to deal with international and national incidents, not just provincial incidents. That was a proposed amendment that we rejected. We are keeping the power to deal with international and national health issues.

Ontario currently has one of the most decentralized public health systems in Canada. While this decentralization does give local health units the flexibility to look after local needs, we need to balance that with the need for provincial consistency and standardization, especially in times of public health emergencies. The proposed legislation is part of this government's larger plan to enhance the way we respond to future public health emergencies.

Our plan also includes the renewal of the Ontario health plan for an influenza pandemic. The lessons we

learned from the 2009 pandemic will be incorporated into the provincial pandemic plan, which is an ever-evolving document that aims to ensure our health system adjusts and operates well during the next pandemic. That, however, does not require legislation.

In addition, Ontario will continue to take steps forward to implement Panorama, a pan-Canadian initiative that will improve public health surveillance and enhance the province's capacity to deliver immunization programs. Again, however, that does not require legislation.

I'm proud of the way this government has demonstrated its commitment to public health in Ontario. The steps we are taking will help us continue to strengthen our pandemic planning and our preparedness for future public health emergencies. The H1N1 pandemic was not as severe as it could have been. The next one could be much worse. This proposed legislation would add to the many important tools already in place and enhance our responses to public health threats. Our proposed amendments and other coordinated steps are critical to ensuring that Ontario's highly regarded public health system continues to promote and protect the health of Ontarians. I urge all the members in this Legislature to support Bill 141.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Guelph on this important legislation. It's my thought that in the past, as she said, there certainly have been challenges to public health with respect to—I remember the incident of SARS, and how ill-planned and ill-conceived—and out of it, I think a lot of reaction caused the government to come up with this response.

I believe being prepared is a laudable goal. But when I look at the handing out of certain medications to Ontarians in the last couple of episodes with the flu vaccinations, that was anything but successful.

I look forward to our member from Whitby—Oshawa, in her remarks, that we're able to come up with a plan that actually works. I'm sort of disappointed in the history, but I look forward with anticipation to solutions in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Jeff Leal: As we've moved through, we're now into third reading of Bill 141, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act in the province of Ontario. I think the member from Guelph did a particularly good job this morning giving a comprehensive summation of where this bill has been through over the last little while, and certainly providing a bit of a history in the province of Ontario.

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We do know, from reading our history books, that the famous Spanish flu of 1919 started in Europe and then of course spread throughout the world, leaving millions dead in its path and a significant number of others who were ill for long periods of time. That historic event is the background for a lot of planning that has been done in

public health over a long period of time, and successive governments of all political stripes have been very involved in the advancing of public health in the province of Ontario—immunization programs in our schools and other health promotion programs.

Our recent experience in Ontario over the last decade in how we coordinate the various entities throughout the province of Ontario to respond to this type of situation—I think Bill 141 goes a very long way to improve that co-ordination capacity throughout the province, and I think that, as we move forward, all parties seem to be in agreement here that these amendments and this bill are the right thing to do. We look forward to having it ultimately passed in the province of Ontario, which will lead to improved public health.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I do commend the member from Guelph for what I feel is a very good summation of what Bill 141 is all about, as well as the amendments that came to committee. We didn't have very many groups presenting; we had two presentations in person and two written submissions that were made.

The bill, of course, was brought forward as a response to a report by Dr. Arlene King, our chief medical officer of health, on the H1N1 pandemic and how Ontario fared. While there was a lot of good in what was brought forward, there was still some room to improve, so the amendments that we discussed were largely in that vein. As PCs, we certainly supported this bill on second reading, and we will be supporting the bill on third reading, as amended.

I will have an opportunity in a very short time to discuss our view of the amendments and the importance of the amendments, but suffice it to say that they essentially strengthened the bill and, I think, clarify in several areas where there was perhaps a little bit of ambiguity about what the bill was intended to say. The language is clarified to make it more consistent with some of the other language within the Health Protection and Promotion Act. We are, as I said, very supportive and look forward to further discussion on this issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would agree that the member has done a summary of what's in the bill. Where I disagree is, the pieces that were not in her summary are the pieces that the NDP find most problematic. You have to realize that this bill was tabled before a full assessment of the province's handling of H1N1 was complete, and this rush to get there before the full assessment was done means that some important pieces got—they're kind of there, but they're not there in a clear fashion.

One of the most eloquent examples I can bring forward is that they talk about a "public health event," as this will be the trigger for the power of the local medical officer of health to be taken away and a coordination power to be given to the chief medical officer of health. Well, a "public health event" could be anything. If public

health is having a public consultation, that's a public health event. If they're holding a training seminar, that's a public health event.

I would like it to be very, very narrowly focused. I come from northern Ontario, and there is no appetite to have central power in Toronto when a serious public health emergency is happening in the north. We have not been well served in northern Ontario by made-in-Toronto, directed-from-Toronto anything. So you'll have to excuse me for being a little bit sheepish with the direction that this bill has taken. The need for coordination needs to be balanced.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Guelph has two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the members from Durham, Peterborough, Whitby–Oshawa and Nickel Belt for their comments.

Just before I respond, I would like to introduce Dr. Arlene King, the chief medical officer of health, who is in the gallery this morning.

Thank you to the members who reminded us that, even if you think back to the Spanish flu at the beginning of the last century, and look through SARS and H1N1, as progressive public health pandemics and epidemics have challenged us, each time we are able to fine-tune the legislation and the authority to deal with those and respond to those. I actually look at that as a strength—the fact that we learn from our experience each time to inform and make the next response even better. I think that's a great strength we have in Ontario.

I would, however, question the member from Nickel Belt, who asserted that the legislation was tabled before we had the report and evaluation from Dr. King on H1N1. I'm sitting here with Dr. King's report, *The H1N1 Pandemic—How Ontario Fared: A Report by Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health*, and it is dated June 2010. I will remind you that this bill was tabled in November 2010. So it was tabled five months after we got Dr. King's response. I would submit to everyone that, in fact, we did have the opportunity to very carefully consider what Dr. King said, and that the threshold in the bill for when the chief medical officer of health can give a directive is much higher than somebody having a conference. That's nuts.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm very pleased to speak this morning, on behalf of our Ontario PC leader, Tim Hudak, and the PC caucus, to third reading of Bill 141, the Health Protection and Promotion Amendment Act, 2010.

The clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 141 was completed on March 28, following one day of hearings on March 22. There were not many submissions made with respect to this bill, and certainly far fewer than what one would normally see in social policy committee. There were, in fact, a total of four presentations. Two were made in person: one by the Association of Local Public Health Agencies and one by the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario. Written submissions

were received from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and from the city of Toronto.

I would like to spend some time discussing the amendments to the bill which were passed in committee and which, in my view, make the bill stronger, but I think it would be helpful, for the benefit of those people who may be following this debate, to set up a little bit of context.

Bill 141, as has been mentioned, came about in response to, and largely echoes, the recommendations made by Ontario's chief medical officer of health, Dr. Arlene King, who I'm also pleased to see here this morning to listen to this debate. This was done with respect to Ontario's response to the H1N1 pandemic of 2009.

Dr. King's thoughtful report, entitled *The H1N1 Pandemic—How Ontario Fared*, noted that Ontario fared well compared to most other countries, but also noted that measures needed to be taken in order to ensure that our public health system would be fully prepared for the next pandemic. Unfortunately, given the nature of the world today, we know that it's not a question of if we will be facing another pandemic; it's when.

Dr. King spoke to this issue in her report when she noted that, "We live in a truly interconnected world, and with that interconnectedness comes vulnerability to literally any disease that emerges anywhere in the world. Because of air travel, a disease can take less than a day to travel around the globe under the right, or wrong, circumstances. A recent study, for example, found Toronto to be one of the most vulnerable cities in the world in that regard because of our high volume of air travel to and from a great number of different locations.

"Simply put, we know beyond a shadow of doubt that at some point, there will either be another pandemic, or another emerging infectious disease event like SARS, that will require a provincial response. We intend that response to be as robust and effective as it can be."

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We certainly owe it to the memory of the people who died and their families to ensure that everything possible is done to protect the health and welfare of everyone in Ontario.

It's important to note that a lot was good in Ontario's response to H1N1. Dr. King, all of the medical officers of health and thousands of health care professionals across the province did an incredible job under very difficult circumstances to inoculate as many people as possible within a very, very short time frame. Similarly, the state of emergency preparedness overall in Ontario was very good. The province's Critical Care Secretariat worked with 124 hospitals to implement a coordinated surge capacity management plan, which helped to manage increased demand in critical care units.

As was noted during second reading, most of the problems encountered in Ontario related to the delivery and dissemination of the H1N1 vaccine. That is primarily what Dr. King's report addresses and what Bill 141 is intended to resolve.

During the H1N1 outbreak, there was significant confusion in a number of areas: (1) with respect to the seasonal flu vaccine and the H1N1 vaccine and the order in which they were to be given. (2) There was confusion about who was in the high-risk groups. In some regions of Ontario, pregnant women were told that they were considered to be in a high-risk group and were eligible for early vaccination, and others were told that they were not a priority. (3) For pregnant women, there was some confusion about whether they should have received the adjuvanted version of the vaccine or the unadjuvanted version, although this was later clarified. (4) The vaccination clinics themselves: There were a lot of problems with these, in that there were significant variations in the times of operation of the clinics, which led to people shopping around the GTA in order to receive the vaccination faster. Initially, the H1N1 vaccine, unlike the seasonal flu vaccine, was distributed through flu clinics. This caused a lot of confusion with the general public, particularly with a lot of seniors, who were normally used to receiving flu vaccines through their family doctor's office.

It's clear that the overall problem with the rollout of the H1N1 vaccination program was the lack of a clearly defined chain of command to eliminate confusion and to ensure a consistent response to medical emergencies across the province. That is what Bill 141 proposes to deliver. The PC caucus, as I mentioned earlier, supported it in second reading, and we will support it again on third reading, as amended.

I'd like to take a moment to review the most substantive amendments to the bill that were passed in committee. Subsection 77.4(3) of the Health Protection and Promotion Act originally allowed the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to make an order to allow the chief medical officer of health to take control of premises for public health purposes in situations where there was "the risk of an outbreak of a communicable disease." The amendment inserted changes to the clause to state that this action could only be taken where there was an "immediate risk of an outbreak of a communicable disease." A similar amendment was made to this clause with respect to action being taken in case of an "immediate risk to the health of persons." The issue of immediacy was also addressed in an amendment to subsection 77.4(6) of the act. All members of the committee voted in favour of these amendments on the basis that any interference in local decision-making and actions by public health authorities should be such that there is no time for normal procedures to be followed and no time for the chief medical officer of health to embark upon normal consultation and communication practices.

Another amendment was made to section 77.9 of the Health Protection and Promotion Act. This section originally allowed the chief medical officer of health to issue a directive to local medical officers of health requiring the adoption of certain policies or procedures in connection with "environmental health." This was changed by amendment to "health hazards" to ensure

consistency with other sections of the act and to more accurately cover situations where these procedures might be employed.

The amendments which were passed in committee were very positive, in my view, and clearly state the circumstances under which the extraordinary powers allowed to the chief medical officer of health may be exercised in times of public health emergencies.

One quite interesting amendment which was not passed, which I would like to discuss for a moment, was recommended by the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario. I think it's rather unfortunate that we didn't pass this one because it would have required the establishment of the position of chief nursing officers in every public health unit. Their position would be "to inform community and region-based planning, strengthen emergency response, increase buy-in and facilitate evaluation."

This made good sense to me because many public health responses are handled by nurses in our communities, in co-operation with physicians and other professional health care providers, so it would be helpful to have a chief nursing officer to assist in planning and coordinating their response. I should add, however, that even though this amendment did not pass, all of the committee members were favourably disposed to the idea. So I certainly hope that we will be able to revisit the concept in the future.

There is one other point that I would like to make before I conclude my remarks. We noted this in second reading debate, but I believe it's sufficiently important that it needs to be repeated. It is the fact that Ontario does not yet have a properly functioning system of electronic health records, despite the passage of almost eight years of Liberal McGuinty government and the expenditure of billions of dollars.

Why is the concept of electronic health records important in the context of the debate on Bill 141? The answer lies in the words of Dr. King herself, our chief medical officer of health, who said—and I quote from her report: "This was the largest and most rapidly executed immunization program in Ontario's history. We underestimated the logistics of organizing and delivering a mass campaign in extraordinarily tight time frames, across a vast province, in the glare of intense media coverage and in the face of rising demand. We underestimated lineups and demand surges. We had different plans unfolding in different communities, with the result being a different level of service depending on where you were in the province. We didn't fully leverage the primary care physicians who traditionally deliver the seasonal shot. And in too many critical ways, we didn't have the details we needed about how the immunization program was unfolding."

That last point is critical. In an era where there is much talk about electronic health systems and patient records, we do not have the capacity in this province to electronically manage and track our immunization programs. This is a serious problem. We need to move to a

21st-century system if we are to effectively deal with the pandemics of the 21st century.

As much as we regard Bill 141 as an important first step, much remains to be done. That being said, we need to start somewhere, so, as I indicated earlier, we in the PC caucus will be supporting Bill 141.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France G  linas: It was interesting to hear what the member had to say about Bill 141, certainly pointing to some of the shortfalls that are still plaguing our health care system. The last one, having to do with electronic health records: From the 60-page report that was done doing the post-analysis of H1N1, we certainly realized that in the clinics—I'll take the Group Health Centre in Sault Ste. Marie—which did have a functional electronic health record, the response on the ground was vastly improved. I would certainly support what my colleague had to say regarding the urgency to bring that kind of tool to our health care system, including our public health system.

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Although we are making strides in rolling out electronic health records, we still have a lot of communication issues, and very few—none that I know of, anyway—that exist right now are able to communicate with our public health units. Our public health units are responsible for doing some of the testing for some of the diseases, and believe it or not, although they're able to do most of this electronically—and the people at the other end, the primary care centres that are sending those referrals, have also started an electronic health record of their own—they are not able to communicate between one another—not great.

When you still get your results from a fax from the health units, you know that there is room for improvement. And the same thing for this bill: There is room for improvement.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'd like to thank the member for Whitby–Oshawa for her party's support on this, and thank her for her very constructive comments.

Just picking up on the member's comments around the confusion that did happen around some of the immunization protocols and who was next up in line and what the hours were, I often give my riding of Guelph as an example. We have no TV station in my riding or in Wellington county, which means that people who watch TV get their news from Kitchener or maybe London, but most likely Toronto. When they get news about what's going on, it's by definition going to be for the wrong public health unit that the reporter is reporting on. So for something like this, where we all need to be on the same page, it's very important that we have a consistent approach so that wherever the public turns for information they're going to get the right information.

With respect to the concept of the chief nursing officer, we did not put it in this bill because that is not the

subject of the bill. Just to assure members, the government is very supportive of the concept of a chief nursing officer, and in fact, we are establishing a working group in collaboration with the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario and the Association of Nursing Directors and Supervisors in Ontario Official Health Agencies. They will be at the working group fleshing out what the role of the chief nursing officer should be so that when we get to firming that up, we can do it properly.

Briefly, with respect to Panorama, which is the public health system, it's not part of the eHealth project; it's a pan-Canadian project trying to get all the provinces to work together. Believe me, we share everybody's frustration on trying to get 10 people to go in the same direction.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I'd like to follow up on the comments of our health critic, the member from Whitby–Oshawa. Much of the initiative, as I understand, for this legislation is to strengthen our health promotion, our public health system, with respect to anticipation of the next pandemic. We know there will be more. We've had the emergence of something like 30 various viruses and bacteria in the last 30 years: Ebola; legionnaires' disease; hepatitis C; people who spent time in Saudi Arabia in the 1980s are not allowed to give blood right now because of BSE-contaminated meat that was shipped there from Britain; H5N1, the avian flu; and of course H1N1, which, as I understand, triggered much of the need for this legislation.

Internationally there was coordination; the World Health Organization and the federal government seemed to do a pretty good job. The problem was a very logistical error and fault in distributing vaccines in the province of Ontario.

My concern with the legislation—and I don't know to what extent the committee was able to spend time on this. We can't fight the Second World War based on World War I, and by the same token, we can't fight future battles based on past battles.

Anybody who's on Twitter, for example, if you hit hashtag Fukushima—now there's a public health issue. I don't know whether this committee has been monitoring and studying the public health response in Japan—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: First of all, as a physician legislator, I'm particularly pleased to be able to speak to this very important bill in which we empower our chief medical officer of health, who joins us today, to better synchronize our messaging across the province of Ontario.

Some of my honourable colleagues mentioned Fukushima, and I think those of us in the medical and biological communities can perhaps, as the member suggests, use that as an example of where we very much need to have coordinated messaging.

Just as a quick case in point, the Japanese government has just announced, I think as of yesterday, that something on the order of about three million gallons of low-radioactive water has been released directly into the Pacific, and likely more pending. There's likely going to be a slow but steady burn on the ecological front. In some of the spent fuel rods, atomic fission continues. These are very important issues. Something on the order of about 50,000 to 100,000 people have been displaced, and many more are homeless and unable to actually return to areas. That is very much, as you've said, sir, a public health emergency that needs a coordinated response.

Now, we certainly hope and pray that no such calamity befalls the province of Ontario. But should something on that order ever happen, whether it's infectious or nuclear or a chemical spill or all the various things that we treat our environment to, that is precisely the point where we need to have effective, coordinated, synchronized best practices diffused on an instantaneous basis.

Of course, in the age of Twitter and Facebook and electronic communication, I think we really need to make use of all our emergency management services.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Whitby—Oshawa has two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I would like to thank my colleagues the members from Nickel Belt, Guelph, Haldimand—Norfolk and Etobicoke North for their comments.

The member from Nickel Belt is quite right in her concern with the issue of electronic health records. We hear a lot about the digitizing of records in physicians' offices. Of course, that's only half of the work that needs to be done, because physicians and other health care professionals need to be able to communicate with each other. That's the big piece of work that has yet to be done so that they can communicate with each other and with public health units and be able to respond to these kinds of emergencies.

The member from Guelph mentioned the position of the chief nursing officer. I am really pleased to hear that there is that working group working with the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, because I think that is a really important position. We look forward to this position once it has been fleshed out by the working group.

Thirdly, the members from Haldimand—Norfolk and Etobicoke North both mentioned the types of issues that we might face—medical emergencies or public health emergencies—and queried whether we had considered the Fukushima situation in our deliberations. I can certainly report that, yes, we did.

In our discussions around the amendments to this bill, we deliberately tried to keep the language as open-ended as possible to contemplate all of those sorts of situations that we know about now. But then, of course, there are many other situations that we can't even contemplate yet. We want to make sure that this piece of legislation can pass the test of time. Though we certainly hope that we don't encounter any of these situations in the future, such as what happened in Japan most recently, we need to be

prepared for that, so the language of the act, as we tried to develop it in committee, hopefully will reflect that and will allow for us to deal effectively with any of those situations that might arise.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

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M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to start by thanking our chief medical officer of health, Dr. King, for having taken the time out of what I know is a very busy schedule to take part in the proceedings and listen in this morning. I think it shows her dedication to the field of public health, and I certainly thank you for it. I would be tempted to add that I wish our Minister of Health was as dedicated to public health as our chief medical officer of health, but I digress so I will stick to my notes.

The NDP voted against this bill in second reading, the Health Protection and Promotion Amendment Act, basically because we had serious and significant concerns at two levels. The first one was the process that was used to bring this bill and the second is some of the content of the bill.

During the committee hearings we were presented with quite disturbing pictures as to how poor the process and the consultations leading to that bill were. We heard it in many different ways from the different stakeholders who came. I would say that this is part of what makes me so worried about this bill. It is also at the core of the worry as to the hesitance I have to fully support this bill. To me, it's another example of legislation that was rushed and kind of incomplete and a bit sloppy. I don't understand why the government keeps doing this. The amendments that were proposed, both by our caucus, by the PC caucus as well as by the government themselves, have cleaned things up a bit and have brought together some loose ends and some inconsistency, but in our view, in the NDP, we still see that there are some loose ends that have not been tied and some inconsistencies that still exist in a piece of legislation.

To me it is a serious problem when a bill is incomplete, when a bill has loose ends, because in many years from now, this piece of legislation will still be there. It will be read by people who were not part of those debates. A bill should stand by itself and be clear to whoever reads it. Right now, I don't think we have achieved this.

This bill, first of all, was introduced before a full assessment of Ontario's performance during the H1N1 was complete. Actually, the bill passed first reading a full 10 days before the Minister of Health released the findings on Ontario's response to H1N1. We all knew that this report was coming. We all knew that we need to learn from what happened during H1N1. What did we do well? What could we have done better? What are some of the best practices that we can learn out of this? We were all looking forward to reading the minister's response—the Ontario response to the H1N1 report—but this bill was tabled before we even had a chance to read it or see it. When we did have a chance to read the report, we saw

that nowhere in the report does it point to a widespread problem with coordination, or nowhere in the report do we point toward a lack of control by the Ontario chief medical officer of health. So why is it that we are bringing this bill forward when the report clearly states that we have done some good things and we could have done things better? Why don't we focus on the things that we could have done better so that we prepare ourselves for the next time rather than bring forward a bill that was not really pointed to in the report? The report does not say that we had a lack of control by the Ontario chief medical officer of health or a lack of coordination. It does talk about a need for communication, but to me, communication and coordination are two completely different functions. This bill talks about coordination; it does not talk about communication. I suppose that in the coordination, communication could be included, but coordination goes way further than just central communication. This is worrisome to the NDP.

In fact, the ministry report makes multiple mentions of the value of local control. There are 60 pages in this report; you will find reference to the value of local control every second page or so. This points to the value of having our 36 health units, health units that know the population they serve. They know how to communicate with them, they know how they react, and they know the people who are hard to serve, hard to reach. This is what they're there to do, and they do a great job at it. Our health units are very good. Do they have their challenges? Absolutely, but they are champions in public health for their own communities, and they do this by bringing forward public health policy, but they also do this by making sure that they connect and they stay connected. They have the pulse of the community in the geographic area that they serve.

The report on Ontario's response to H1N1 raised numerous issues, but none of them is addressed in Bill 141. So here we have a government that rushed the process behind Bill 141, and we still have in front of us, in third reading, a bill that is flawed, despite some amendments. I think the member from Whitby-Oshawa was certainly very good in explaining the changes that had taken place in committee and the amendments that were brought forward to make the bill stronger, but there are still some that were turned down, that were not acted upon and, to me, need to be acted upon.

Bill 141 focuses on one kind of initiative, the central control of public health units, and really, think of it as central coordination. What does that mean? Bill 141 expands the circumstances in which the chief medical officer of health would take control of what a public health unit is doing in its geographical area, either a single unit, a number of them or all 36 of them, depending on the circumstances. This is what Bill 141 is all about.

I think we all agree that, during a pandemic or another public health emergency, there is a need for central communication, and I think the report talks to that. But that's not what Bill 141 does. Bill 141 focuses on the central control of the public health units: the chief

medical officer of health taking control of a health unit. To me, this is counter to the design of our entire public health system. What makes the strength of our public health system is that local control, the fact that they are the champion of public health for their geographical area, and every area has its own set of different circumstances that will mean that its response will have to be adapted so that the end goal of what we're trying to do is achieved for everyone in Ontario.

But in order to get to the end goal, the steps to get there will be targeted. They will be different in the First Nations that are served by the Porcupine Health Unit than by the London Health Unit. They are all different because, although we are all Ontarians, we come with our own sets of diversities, and our health units have learned to identify and respect those diversities. This is why they are so good at what they are doing, and this is why I support the system that we have in place.

Here we have the chief medical officer of health, under circumstances that I would have liked to have very narrowly defined but we didn't get there, who is very capable, very well-intentioned and comes to us with lots of experience in public health, who will come and will be able to coordinate from Toronto the next pandemic or the next public health emergency that comes.

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What we had before was a system where all 36 medical officers of health had an opportunity to have their voice heard. The chief medical officer of health absolutely had her voice heard; I mean, she is our chief medical officer of health. We created this position because we believed we needed it, and I still believe we need it. But then the particularity, the knowledge, the skills, the experience and the diversity of all 36 medical officers of health made that response even stronger, because you had 36—37 with our chief medical officer of health—dedicated public health professionals looking at an issue together and bringing forward all of their best will, best experience and best knowledge to attain the best of outcomes during a time of public health emergency. This is a system that I believe in, a system where everybody has a voice and the diversity of Ontario has an opportunity to be heard.

I must say that I come with my sets of biases. I come from northeastern Ontario. I have been a health care provider in northeastern Ontario for 25 years of my life. I have seen first-hand decisions made in Toronto that have not served the people of northeastern Ontario in the best of ways, decisions that were made that were so Toronto-centric that once they came out to the field we would laugh and say, "What are those people talking about? Have they ever set foot in Mattagami? How do you roll this out in Gogama? That makes no sense. This is made for Toronto. This is made for a big urban centre."

Nickel Belt has no big urban centre. Nickel Belt is 36 beautiful little communities that have very little in common with a big urban centre, but there are still people who deserve protection in the case of a public health emergency, so I support this system.

At the core of what worries the NDP is that this valuable system that we have had in place in Ontario for all those years, where public health is locally grounded, knows their population, knows their community—all of this, under sets of circumstances that, to me, are way too broad, could be thrown out for the need for central coordination.

We already have central communication tools if we choose to use them, so if you want to improve communication so everybody knows how the H1N1 vaccine will be rolled out, etc., we already have this. We are now adding centralization power. This comes at a cost. It will always come at a cost. The need to act quickly to coordinate a response will come with a cost. The cost will be a centralized response that is not conducive to the best quality of public health care for pieces of Ontario.

Coming from where I come from, chances are that my communities are going to be the ones at the losing end. In order to improve coordination and in order to improve what we do during a public health emergency, we will have this power to have a coordinated response.

When I hear “coordinated response,” I hear “one size fits all.” This is it. We have one person, our chief medical officer of health. She is calling the shots. She is telling every single one of the 36 health units, “This is how you shall do things and this is how you will do things.” I agree that there could be some very narrow circumstances where this need for central coordination trumps everything else, but those are very narrow. What we have here is a bill that doesn’t look at those circumstances as being very narrow. We have left them wide, so that means that when a local response by the Sudbury and District Health Unit would have looked very different to achieve quality public health outcomes, it will be trumped by a central coordinated response that won’t be in the best interest of quality public health outcomes for this particular geographical area. So, for the good of the masses, we will sacrifice the quality in some of the health units.

I would have liked the system that we’ve had in Ontario to be protected. I would have liked the circumstances under which those central coordination orders could come to be defined more narrowly. But this has not happened.

I will go into some of the quotes that we’ve had, and I will start with a quote from the Association of Local Public Health Agencies. As you all know, after second reading we had the opportunity for people to come and present. Here’s what the Association of Local Public Health Agencies had to say:

“However, I wish to clarify that public health units were not consulted about the need for an amendment to the HPPA. The need appeared to be a foregone conclusion, and we were asked to comment only on the wording of an amendment that would permit the CMOH to issue directives to medical officers of health and boards of health during an emergency situation, a power that some argue already exists within the current HPPA.

“Further, we would like to note that, historically, changes that have been made to the HPPA have occurred only after careful consideration and thorough review of multiple reports and consultations, like SARS. In contrast, Bill 141 was tabled following the recommendations of a single report that has been described by its author as ‘informal and initial.’ Despite our requests for a delay of legislative changes until the Ontario H1N1 report was released and to allow medical officers of health, boards of health and other stakeholders time to enter into a robust dialogue, the legislation was tabled.

“Basically, we feel that a more comprehensive review of the issues following H1N1 and a meaningful consultation with the field would have led to a clearer understanding of the potential areas for improvement within our public health system. Such a process may indeed have indicated a need for additional CMOH powers, but it may also have indicated alternative approaches and identified additional required modifications that would collectively further enhance and strengthen our public health system’s ability to protect the health of all Ontarians, especially during an emergency.”

To me, there are some parallels to be drawn here. You see how this piece of legislation was brought forward without consulting with the field, without consulting with the people who are our experts in public health. They themselves say that they don’t know if the legislation that will give additional powers to our chief medical officer of health is needed. They don’t know if it’s the right way to go, because there hasn’t been an opportunity for everybody in the field—not only our medical officer of health but also our board of health—to have a say in this.

Why are we taking away an opportunity to do things better, to engage people who are the leaders in the field so that they can guide us and tell us, “Here’s how you make pandemic response stronger, better, with better-quality outcomes for the people in Ontario”? We are shutting down a voice that, to me, has a lot to bring to this dialogue. They didn’t have a chance to be heard. Once the bill was made, once the idea that the chief medical officer of health needed more power, those decisions had already been made. Then we asked them to wordsmith the bill. To me, this is contrary to everything we’ve ever done in public health in Ontario. In public health, we’ve always reached out. We’ve always worked things through from the ground up so that everybody had a chance to put in their own requirements. We were respectful of the diversity of Ontario in what we did in public health because we engaged all of those people. But this was not done for that bill, and it is a bill that will further go down the same track by giving the chief medical officer of health power to issue directives to our medical officers of health, to our boards of health.

Let’s see what Toronto Public Health had to say about Bill 141, the bill that we are talking about:

“It is our view that virtually none of any of the identified shortcomings of the response to H1N1, which has been previously conveyed as the rationale for the proposed changes, would have been solved by the existence

of a directive-making power in the hands of the" chief medical officer of health, "such as the power proposed in Bill 141.

"Implicit in the proposed amendments to provide directive-making powers to the CMOH is the apparent belief that if the chief medical officer had had the power to simply direct the response, coordination would have been improved. We do not share that assessment. Directive-making power would not have altered the problems with vaccine supply and distribution, would not have clarified the role and function of local health integration networks (LHINs) in the response, or alleviated the need for local modification to address specific community needs.

"While problems of communication were indeed identified by all parties regarding the H1N1 response, we remain unconvinced that legal directives from the CMOH would have solved this issue. Moreover, the use of legal powers to deal with a communications problem is a somewhat inappropriate, blunt, and potentially counterproductive approach.

"If legal powers alone were sufficient to effect change, all boards of health in the province would at this time have a full-time, fully qualified medical officer of health as required under the HPPA, something which is demonstrably not the case."

I find this really puzzling. Here we have Bill 141, the Health Protection and Promotion Amendment Act. We are told that we need this act so that the best practices that we've learned from the response to H1N1 in the fall of 2009 could be improved, we are told that H1N1 is the impetus behind this bill, yet we have the largest public health unit in Ontario as well as the report telling us that if this bill had been in force before H1N1, it would not have changed any of the shortcomings that we saw, that it would not have improved our response to H1N1. There are ways to improve our response, but none of them are covered in Bill 141.

So the rationale for Bill 141 is not there. We cannot see, in any of the reports, anything that points to the idea that if the chief medical officer of health had directive-making powers, things would have been better.

I see that you want to stand up and cut me off, so I will let you do that.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. It being close to a quarter after 10, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Kim Craitor: I want to introduce two guests—I know they're just getting into Parliament: George Hostick and his son Jordan Hostick. They're from my riding of Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie. I invited them up here specifically for question period because I assured them they'd be able to watch

this House being respectful of each other. They're excited about seeing that here in Parliament.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I trust all members listened to your comments.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Tim Hudak: I have a question to the Premier. Yesterday was Premier McGuinty's wag-the-dog moment. He tried pulling the oldest trick in the book by picking a phony fight to deflect attention from his own expensive mess on hydro.

Premier, Ontario families have seen you jack up the cost of their hydro bills now for seven years. You want them to think that when they open up their hydro bills, they should blame the Prime Minister, but the McGuinty name is all over skyrocketing hydro bills in the province of Ontario.

Premier, did you really think you could divert Ontario families into thinking someone other than the McGuinty government was to blame for skyrocketing hydro bills?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm really pleased that my colleague has raised this matter. I think it's an important discussion that we should entertain, and I would ask my honourable colleague to give some sincere thought to supporting our initiative in this regard.

This is the bottom line: The federal government recently announced that it has the intention of supporting a \$4.2-billion loan guarantee to help Newfoundland move ahead with a big electricity infrastructure project. The federal government says they're interested in supporting electricity infrastructure projects if they are of national significance and if they help us reduce greenhouse gases.

I would argue, and I know my honourable colleague will want to support me in this regard, that the heavy lifting that is being done in this country when it comes to investing in electricity infrastructure and eliminating greenhouse gases is being done here in Ontario. If the federal government is going to support the people of Newfoundland, they have a corresponding responsibility to support the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Here's the problem, Premier, and we know why you're trying this wag-the-dog gambit: You have made an expensive mess out of our hydro system, and Ontario families are getting stuck with the bills. Instead of trying to fix the mess you've created, you started a phony fight about Ontario subsidizing power projects in other provinces.

But Premier McGuinty has his own subsidy scheme. Premier McGuinty has made Ontario families pay \$1 billion to subsidize the export of power to other provinces like Quebec or the state of New York. While families in Belleville and Brampton see their hydro bills going

through the roof, he is subsidizing power to Quebec and New York.

Premier, do you really think that you can get away with this?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There is no foundation in fact for my colleague's assertions.

I want to return to a very important principle here. During the last several years, the federal government has found—and I speak to federal governments of all political stripes; this is a non-partisan issue—its way forward to subsidize electricity infrastructure projects in Yukon, in Alberta, in Quebec, and now they're entertaining a project in Newfoundland. The federal government is telling us they are interested in supporting projects that reduce greenhouse gases and that ensure that we have electricity projects that are of national significance. We remain the country's economic engine, and there is no greater greenhouse gas reduction project taking place in all of North America than here in Ontario. I invite my honourable colleague to join the people of Ontario as we say to the federal government, or any political party that would assume the responsibilities of the federal government: "If you're going to support electricity projects in other parts of the"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, your own subsidy scheme has resulted in \$1 billion being used to subsidize hydro exports into Quebec and New York state.

You say that the facts are wrong. Well, Premier, we get these from Jan Carr, who is the former head of the Ontario Power Authority. Those are his numbers. You picked him. You built the Ontario Power Authority.

You're stuck with the facts that you have a \$1-billion subsidy to Quebec and New York state. You sunk \$1 billion into the smart meter program, which is nothing more than another McGuinty tax grab. Who knows what you've done with all the money that has been collected through the debt retirement charge?

Premier, the Ontario PCs will stand with hard-working families to say, "Enough is enough." We need to bring an end to the expensive mess you've made of our hydro system.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would encourage my honourable colleague to set aside the talking points he has received from Ottawa and listen to what the people of Ontario are concerned about. They are concerned about the fact that every time we invest in these electricity infrastructure projects in other parts of the country, 40% of that expense is coming from Ontario taxes. That's the way it works.

Again, I say, and I invite my colleague to support us in this regard, if the federal government is going to invest in electricity infrastructure projects in other parts of the country, they have a corresponding responsibility to invest in our infrastructure projects right here in Ontario. We're doing the heaviest lifting in the country in terms of rebuilding our electricity system and cleaning it up for our children and investing at the same time in an excit-

ing, new clean energy industry. If they've got money for oil and gas in the west, I'm suggesting they should have money for clean energy right here in Ontario.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Premier, not only have you made an expensive mess out of our hydro system, but you've also made an expensive mess out of our health care system. Just look at the billion dollars you wasted in the eHealth boondoggle. We find out now, Premier, that two years later, you're still making Ontario families pay the price of your mismanagement of the eHealth file.

Five days after the sunshine list came out and showed that Ron Sapsford, the former Deputy Minister of Health who was involved with the eHealth scandal, received \$762,000—your response to date on this outrage? "I can't comment on that." Premier, that is not good enough. Two years after he left the employment, he received \$762,000.

Come clean: Why did this money get taken out of health care to pay off your backroom deal?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I am pleased to take the first question. I know the Minister of Health is going to want to speak to this.

I just want to speak to the whole issue of transparency and accountability. I want to compare and contrast in terms of what we've done here. You will recall that the previous government hid a \$5-billion deficit from Ontarians. We have a new law that prevents that from ever happening again. The previous government refused to include OPG, Hydro One, universities and hospitals under the freedom of information act. We've included all those and more. They had a response rate to freedom-of-information requests of 50%. We're at 88%; that is the best ever. They took OPG off the sunshine list; we put it on. They used taxpayer money for partisan advertising, spending more than \$250 million; we made that illegal in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier obviously does not want to answer a very direct question. This list came out five days ago, Premier, and you have yet to answer why Mr. Sapsford, implicated in the eHealth scandal, still, today, received \$762,000.

I know you want to bounce this to the health minister, but the health minister refused to answer these questions yesterday. They then sent out a junior staffer who had the advice, Premier, that if Ontario families are concerned, well, they should track down Ron Sapsford themselves. What an outrageous answer. What an irresponsible approach by this government.

1040

Families want to know, Premier: Why do they continue to pay for your eHealth boondoggle and why did Ron Sapsford win the lottery?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I welcome the opportunity. Let's be very clear: We are shining the light. We said that

in cases where someone who was on the sunshine list had been seconded from a hospital or from another organization, we would show that person on the sunshine list. We have met that commitment.

In fact, we dedicated an entire section of the sunshine list entirely to secondments to improve transparency, so those who have been seconded show up twice on the list. The information is there.

I can tell you, we will not take lessons on transparency from the people opposite. When we introduced the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act, legislation that brings hospitals under freedom of information, legislation that prohibits using public dollars, they—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, Ontario families are looking for a straight answer. I know they're hard to come by from the McGuinty government after seven years in office. I know you're tired and out of touch, and I know you cooked up a backroom deal with Mr. Sapsford, but you've been caught out.

You've been caught by the fact that \$762,000 was paid out to Ron Sapsford, the former Deputy Minister of Health involved in the eHealth scandal, some two years after he left government employment. He won the lottery. Who knows where he's at, and you're asking families who pay the bills to track him down? We have the same thing happening with Sarah Kramer.

So I ask you, Premier: Why won't you come clean with Ontario families? Just tell us simply, just tell us in a straightforward manner: Why do they continue to pay for your backroom deals stemming from the eHealth scandal?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Leader of the Opposition should know, if he doesn't know, that section 42 of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act prohibits the employer from disclosing personal information other than what's in the compendium without the written consent of the employee. If he's asking me to break the law, I say, "No, I'm not going to break the law."

What I am going to say is that this is a government that's committed to getting best value for the money we spend on health care. I want to ask you: Where were you when we were fighting to bring down the price of generic drugs? I know where you were; you were at a fundraiser with the owners of pharmacies. We took a position to take \$500 million off the price of generic drugs, and you were nowhere to be found. We know exactly where you were found, and I don't think the people of Ontario are very proud of that.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, I asked about the outrageous amount of money paid to Ron Sapsford, one of the main players in the \$1-billion boondoggle scandal. Mr. Sapsford pocketed more than three quarters of a million dollars in

wages and benefits last year, even though he left his job the year before.

Is the Premier of this province prepared to offer a full explanation today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me say again that our commitment to transparency is complete. We have taken several steps to ensure that the people of this province have access to information, including salaries, for more people than were on the sunshine list, far more people than when we took office. Our commitment to transparency is clear.

We will not take lessons from the party opposite when it comes to transparency. When we introduced the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act—as I was saying, this legislation brings hospitals under freedom of information: an enormous improvement in transparency. It's legislation that prohibits using public dollars to hire lobbyists. The critic of the third party called the legislation worthless. We don't all think that legislation is—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This government likes to talk a good game about trying to rein in public sector executive salaries, but where I come from, talk is cheap. In Hamilton, people want to know why Ron Sapsford was paid as much as he was and why his compensation was buried in the records of Hamilton Health Sciences.

Again, is this Premier prepared to give us a good explanation or will he continue to duck and cover and hope it all blows over?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This information was definitely not buried. It was in the sunshine list not once, but twice. So if the research department of the third party had actually taken the time to press control-F and type in the name "Sapsford," they would have found that information not once, but twice. The information is there. It is as clear as clear can be. Whether you have the hard copy or whether you have the electronic copy, the information is there.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This government blew \$1 billion on eHealth, with little to show for it. When the scandal was exposed, some folks were made to walk the plank, but less than two years later we learned that some of those same folks are still cashing in, with Ron Sapsford, the three-quarters-of-a-million-dollar man, leading the pack. Given what has happened here, why should Ontarians have any confidence at all in anything this Premier or his government says or does?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I appreciate the question and I am happy to bring the members of this Legislature and the public up to date on where we are with eHealth. We have made tremendous progress. Now almost five million Ontarians have access to electronic medical records in their physicians' offices. Almost two million children have electronic health records. Over 100,000 remote medical consultations have taken place through

telemedicine—that's almost double what we had before. All Ontario hospitals are now filmless, so all of that digital imaging information is collected in one place, with easy access. We are making tremendous strides in eHealth, and I look forward to talking more about that.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Minister of Health. When confronted with the curious case of Mr. Sapsford yesterday, this minister embarrassingly responded by saying, "I wasn't part of the arrangement." Ontario families deserve a full explanation of what happened here. Is that really the best that this government's Minister of Health can do?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said in a question to the official opposition, the FIPPA legislation prevents me from discussing that personal information of employees. I am not going to break the law, no matter how many times you ask me to. That information is protected by law.

Having said that, we are determined to get the best value for health care dollars. In the budget that we are now in the process of debating, we are instructing executives to cut their spending by 10% over the next two years. We have frozen compensation in the broader public sector, and we are continuing to bring down the expenses in our hospital executive offices.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This minister needs a crash course on ministerial responsibility pronto. But here's the galling part about her unwillingness to offer a full explanation: While Ron Sapsford walks away with more than 750,000 in precious health care dollars, Ontario's health care system is falling apart at the seams. In London last night, sick Ontarians were told to stay away from severely overcrowded emergency rooms. Since the minister won't explain Mr. Sapsford's circumstances to this House, will she at least do so for the families in her own riding, in her own hometown, who couldn't access their ER last night?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The health care system is changing in many ways. It is getting stronger every single day. One of the ways it's getting stronger is that there are far more options for Ontarians than there used to be. Emergency rooms are one option, but there are far more options, which is why we have a website called healthcareoptions.ca. I urge everyone to actually take a few minutes, go on that website, plug in their postal code and they will see how many other health care options are available right in their own neighbourhood. I took the time to do it in my neighbourhood and I was surprised by how many places I could go to if I needed an X-ray or if somebody needed to be stitched up. Emergency departments are one option, but there are many more options, and I urge people to actually explore that website and find out what they are.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This minister is suggesting that Ontarians go to a website instead of an ER? That's pretty outrageous in terms of health care options.

Here's the state of Ontario's health care system under this minister's watch: Ontario families are told to stay away from overcrowded emergency rooms; some have lost their local ERs altogether; others see cuts to nurses and other front-line staff and services. All the while, well-connected health care executives continue to receive outrageous compensation packages. How can this minister justify sky-high executive salaries in the health care sector for the same people who are squandering those dollars and who are laying off staff people left, right and centre?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'd like to remind the member opposite about one of the items contained in our Excellent Care for All Act. Part of that legislation is about improving quality in our hospitals.

One of the ways we will be measuring quality as we move forward is how patients feel about the care they received in that hospital. Also as part of that legislation, executive compensation will be tied to achieving those quality outcomes.

We are moving forward to strengthen our health care system. We're moving forward in strengthening the quality of our health care system. Part of how we measure quality is the care that patients feel they get. We are moving forward. There are other health care options, and I believe anyone who actually would—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is also to the Minister of Health. Yesterday, in response to a Liberal softball question, you said something that caught my ear. You said, "We have established the Drummond commission to look for better, more efficient ways to deliver" health care. That's odd, since that's what you say that the local health integration networks bureaucrats are paid \$250 million to do. Now that the Bay Street banker who reports to the Premier's office is in charge of health care, what will LHIN bureaucrats do all day?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have to say, I'm disappointed in the question. I think all of us should be looking at ways to improve the health care system. All of us have an opportunity to contribute to that debate—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.
Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to quote from an article written by Gerry Macartney, who's the chief executive of the London Chamber of Commerce and who actually took the time to visit a LHIN and understand

what was going on there. I'm just going to quote a little bit from this letter: "Chambers have historically argued the more decisions made locally the better. With the LHINs, all decisions are made in our community at open, public board meetings. Previously, decisions were made in Toronto by those dreaded"—his words, not mine—"bureaucrats. And we still maintain local autonomy for fundraising and many other decisions as all health service providers, including hospitals, were able to maintain their boards. So here too it can be argued that LHINs reduce big government."

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Premier McGuinty says that you can't cut one cent out of the budget without Ontario simply falling apart. But day in and day out, Ontario families see that there's plenty of waste and duplication you could eliminate. Your Bay Street banker copying what LHINs do isn't the only duplication. You pay four levels of home care bureaucracy but your only defence is to say that you spent almost \$1 billion more on home care. Of course you do: Paying all the unnecessary layers of bureaucracy for duplication doesn't come cheaply.

An Ontario PC government will protect health care by cutting the waste and putting more money back into front-line health care. Why do you continue to spin your record of blatant untruths about what we will do?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I do feel the need to correct the member opposite. The LHINs cost about \$70 million a year.

What they've done is creative accounting. They've added up all the money ever spent on LHINs and come up with that number. So let's be clear: It's \$70 million. To quote Gerry Macartney, because he was interested in that and he heard the rhetoric: "As to the cost of our SW LHIN, it allocates \$2.04 billion to 150 health providers, while the LHIN operates on just \$5 million. In other words, they allocate 99.75% of all funding received to those providers. Not many organizations operate at that level of efficiency."

The other thing the member opposite refuses to acknowledge is that we have replaced two layers of bureaucracy with the LHINs. It costs no more than the arrangement under their government, but it does give people a local voice. You want to silence the local voice because you—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Premier. The McGuinty government is appointing Rosemarie Leclair, chief executive officer of Hydro Ottawa, as the new chair of the Ontario Energy Board. Last year, Hydro Ottawa, under Ms. Leclair's watch, spent almost \$30,000 of ratepayers' money hosting preferred customers in corporate box seats at Ottawa Senators games. The role of the Ontario Energy Board is to protect ratepayers' interests.

My question: How can Ontario hydro consumers have any confidence in the McGuinty government's appointment of the new chair of the Ontario Energy Board?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I've got to tell you, the NDP's trash-a-character-a-day approach to politics in this Legislature is getting very, very tiresome—to make comments like that about Rosemarie Leclair, somebody who has been recognized around the world as a true leader in this particular sector and in others.

Let me just share with you some of the recent individual recognitions she has received. She is considered one of Canada's top most powerful women. She has received awards from the Women's Executive Network, Quality of Life Awards, St. Joseph women's centre—she's an Ottawa-honoured champion—the United Nations Association in Canada, and she was named one of Canada's top 100 most powerful women by the Women's Executive Network.

To take cheap shots like that at somebody with that kind of character is beneath that member and beneath this Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: This is not so much about Ms. Leclair as it is about this government's standards. While Ontario Hydro consumers struggle with skyrocketing hydro bills, the McGuinty government continues to condone excessive executive salaries and perks at municipally owned hydro companies. Municipal employees are on the sunshine list, but municipal hydro employees are not. Golf memberships and professional sports tickets are banned in public agencies but not at municipal hydro companies.

I ask again: What message does the McGuinty government think it sends to hydro consumers when a municipal hydro executive who engaged in conducting business at Ottawa Senators hockey games is the new chair of the Ontario Energy Board?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Once again, the NDP are into this trash-a-character-a-day smear campaign that has been going on here for weeks now.

Rosemarie Leclair not only is fully qualified to serve in the position that she is being considered to be appointed to—let me just go over some of her background, just so that those listening can hear: Yes, she was president and chief executive officer of Hydro Ottawa Holding Inc. since 2005. She served as deputy city manager for public works and services from 2000 to 2005; commissioner of corporate services from 1995 to 2000; director of corporate renewal from 1994 to 1996; director of licensing, transportation and parking—she has an incredible amount of qualifications, but more than that, she will be very well suited, having served at a local distribution company very close to Ontario's consumers. Running that OEB organization—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is for the Minister of Energy as well. Last week, Prime Minister Harper pledged \$4.2 billion in loan guarantees to help Newfoundland and Labrador develop the lower Churchill Falls hydroelectric project. Here in Ontario, that's roughly the cost of the Lower Mattagami and Niagara tunnel hydro projects combined.

Members will know that Ontarians contribute 40 cents of every single dollar the federal government spends. Whether it's their investments in multi-million-dollar projects—my question is around fairness for Ontario.

Ontarians remember well the state of chronic disrepair and neglect that our very own energy infrastructure was left in, in the years leading up to 2003, by the previous government. As we have been rebuilding that infrastructure into a clean, modern and reliable energy system, what are we doing to ensure that Ontarians get the best value for their investment?

1100

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for Ottawa Centre for raising what is really a very important question. He's absolutely right on this.

When the federal government pledges specific assistance to another part of Canada for a specific multi-billion-dollar energy project, 40% of that money is coming from Ontario families. We've undertaken the important task of rebuilding our electricity system over the next two decades. There is a cost to that. That's why we've put in place the clean energy benefit that's taking 10% off of consumers' bills.

But I think Ontarians expect that if their federal tax dollars are going to provide special supports for electricity projects in other provinces like Newfoundland, the same level of federal support needs to be available here in Ontario.

We believe in a strong Ontario, and we believe that a strong Ontario means a strong Canada. We're doing our part, but working with the federal government, we can do even more and we can do it even faster.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: The government's long-term energy plan clearly addresses the need for 80% of Ontario's electricity system to be rebuilt and modernized over the next 20 years. It tangibly lays out for Ontarians what those investments are and how much they will be over that time.

There's no doubt that it's a sizable undertaking, but it's one that is absolutely necessary, given the complete shambles of a system we inherited seven years ago in power warnings, brownouts, 127% more coal in our air and a system on life support from leased generators and US coal imports. This is a situation no government should have ever let happen in Ontario. How do we ensure that sort of energy mess never happens again in our province?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member paints a vivid and accurate picture of the shoddy state of our electricity system just seven years ago.

Our long-term energy plan provides what's needed to build a modern, reliable energy system that gets us out of coal, cleaning our air and improving our health while building a global, leading clean energy economy. That's why when Prime Minister Harper promised almost \$2 billion of Ontarians' money to subsidize a clean energy project in another province, it was very appropriate for our Premier to speak up for Ontario. Ontario families deserve the same recognition from our federal government as families in Newfoundland.

This side of the House stands up for Ontario. This side of the House is not afraid to challenge Stephen Harper for fairness. The Leader of the Opposition gets tongue-tied when called upon to stand up for Ontario against Stephen Harper. That's why he remains silent and refuses to talk about his plan until the federal election—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the finance minister. Page 71 of the budget describes the job Premier McGuinty has given to his Bay Street banker friend. It says he will come up with reforms to accelerate eliminating the deficit, examine long-term changes to how government works and explore core services and say which areas are core and which can be delivered by another entity.

In any other province, this sounds like the job description of the finance minister. Why should Ontario families have confidence in you when clearly Premier McGuinty does not?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Let me just take a moment on the first question to describe a little bit about Mr. Drummond and his background. He was a Matthews fellow and distinguished visiting scholar in the school of policy studies at Queen's University. He's the former assistant deputy minister at the federal Ministry of Finance. He served the federal government for 23 years, and his service included coordinating and planning the budget. It also included economic analysis, fiscal policy, tax policy, social policy and federal-provincial relations. He is also the former senior vice-president and chief economist at TD Bank. Mr. Drummond is an outstanding Canadian and Ontarian who will serve this province very well.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a moment. I just remind members on both sides that—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Durham, how can you listen to me when you're interjecting?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Halton, that's not helpful either.

We're now past the halfway point of question period. I've tried to be tolerant with a number of members, but they seem to be wanting to push the envelope as far as they can. So we'll be getting into warnings.

Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Minister, this Bay Street banker sounds amazing. He'll do the work that you paid LHIN bureaucrats \$250 million to do. He'll do the finance minister's job. Someone should get his name on a lawn sign; then he could be one of the elected members on the sunset review committee proposed by the Ontario PC leader.

An Ontario PC government would make a review of government spending and services accountable to Ontario families. Why have you given that job to an unelected Bay Street banker?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It's unfortunate that the character assassination they aimed at us is now being aimed at the good people of Ontario who volunteer and work hard and also provide great service to Ontarians.

But let me just quote to you from somebody whom you might know of, and what they have to say about Don Drummond. It says, and this is a quote:

"Some of the leaders on this forum are quite distinguished, of no partisan affiliation, in our communities. I'm going to mention one of them: Don Drummond, who's ... one of the most respected economists when we look at budget day here in Ontario. Who do we look to when we want an objective, informed opinion? We look to Don Drummond."

That's what John O'Toole, the PC member for Durham, said just last year. Shame on your cheap, cheap senseless attacks on an outstanding Ontarian—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): A warning to the member from Halton.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Essex.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Renfrew. Member from Sault Ste. Marie. Member from Willowdale.

New question.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, your government has introduced Bill 151, the forest tenure reform act. This bill is now ordered to committee. Your government, by majority at committee, refused to allow this bill to travel into northern Ontario. This has got the ire up of a number of people in the north, and I just read from one letter from Roger Sigouin, the mayor of Hearst, who says, "We plead with you to re-

consider the present decision to forgo consultation on Bill 151 in the north."

My question to you is: Why are you ignoring the pleas of a northern mayor like Roger Sigouin?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm really pleased to answer this question for Minister Gravelle. It's important to know that when this bill goes to committee it will be open for public hearings in which the forest industry, community leaders and stakeholders are invited to provide input either in writing or in person or through video conferencing.

In 2009, our government announced the beginning of a comprehensive review aimed at the modernization of the Ontario forest tenure and pricing system, and since then, MNDMF has held consultations on forest tenure reform throughout northern Ontario. They were in Beardmore, Bower, Cochrane, Chapleau, Fox Lake reserve, Constance Lake First Nation, Dryden, Fort Frances, Hearst, Hornepayne, Huntsville, Gogama, Kapuskasing, Macdiarmid, Marathon, Midland, Parry Sound—

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, the trees are in northern Ontario. Why aren't you at least going to the place where the industry, by and large, resides? People of the north are upset about this act. They see what has happened in the consultations as not being anything remotely connected to what ended up in the legislation.

My question to you is simply this: Why are you ignoring northern Ontarians and not travelling that bill to the north?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: As I said, there were consultations held in Nipigon, North Bay, Pembroke, Sault Ste. Marie, Sioux Lookout, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Timmins, Toronto and White River.

We conducted over 116 consultations in total, and this legislation was drafted after two years of careful and extensive consultation in which we brought officials from the ministry across the north to meet with members of the forest industry, including OFIA and the Coalition for Putting Ontario's Wood Back to Work, which represents 200 companies representing over 8,600 employees.

We spoke with people in Timmins, the municipal association of FONOM, associations like OPFA, Greenpeace, the Ivey Foundation, and the local members of northern communities, First Nations and aboriginal communities.

We also offered a Web-based engagement tool and met with individual stakeholder groups as part of our consultation efforts.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Mike Colle: To the Minister of Transportation: For 16 long years, since the Harris government killed the building of the Eglinton subway in 1995, the people in

my riding and all the residents living on the Eglinton corridor, from Etobicoke to Scarborough, have been waiting for relief from the bumper-to-bumper gridlock that has created a \$6-billion congestion nightmare in Toronto.

Last Thursday, the Premier and the mayor of Toronto made the long-awaited announcement of a revised transit plan that will finally see the Eglinton cross-town transit line built. Can the minister please let us know the important details of this historic agreement with the city of Toronto?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I sincerely want to thank the member for Eglinton–Lawrence for his promotion of this project. He has been a consistent advocate for a line along Eglinton, and I’m happy to say we’re turning the corner on that.

We’ve reached an agreement on a transit plan that will see the province move forward with our top regional priority, the Eglinton-Scarborough cross-town LRT. The line will stretch underground from the Mount Dennis area in the west all the way to the Scarborough Town Centre. In fact, commuters are getting a 25-kilometre LRT that will be underground. The Eglinton portion will be underground and then it will connect with the Scarborough LRT. The Kennedy station will provide a commuter hub, a transfer hub, for the Bloor-Danforth subway line, the new LRT buses and GO Transit. That’s worth 80,000 jobs. It’s a terrific plan, and we’re moving ahead.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?
Mr. Mike Colle: Thank you, Minister, on behalf of the residents of the Eglinton corridor, from Scarborough all the way to Etobicoke, for this key \$8.4-billion investment that will not only benefit transit riders but also create over 80,000 good jobs for 10 years and get rid of the pollution in the heart of our city.

What is amazing is that there are still the usual critics who continue to say that \$8.4 billion is not enough and that this new agreement with the city of Toronto should be shelved. I can’t believe it.

Minister, how is it that these same critics who opposed the building of the York University line and opposed the building of the air-rail link from Union Station to the airport still claim to be transit advocates, when they also oppose this \$8.4-billion investment in the Eglinton cross-town LRT? How can these people—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: This is the biggest transit investment in a generation. The reality is that we can’t get a straight commitment out of the NDP; we can’t pin them down on what they believe about transit. The Conservatives basically filled in the hole that was dug on Eglinton in 1995 after they were elected. So the reality is that we are playing catch-up because previous governments have not made the investments that needed to be made.

We have worked with the city. We believe in the local democratic process and we believed that we needed to work with the city. We have had those negotiations and they have borne fruit. It’s good news for the taxpayers of

Ontario because this is a regional line that is going to serve the whole GTHA by reaching across the city of Toronto.

A significant part of this arrangement is the Presto card that will allow people to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Health: In 2007, the McGuinty government converted the Ontario air ambulance and critical care land ambulance service to a not-for-profit corporation. As has been the practice of this government, that was done without a competitive process. Since that time, the cost of providing air ambulance services in this province has increased by more than 450%.

Can the minister tell us why costs have been allowed to get out of hand through this organization and why the appropriate accountability measures have not been put in place?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I welcome the question. I do have to say that I think it’s very important that when people need health care and they need to be transported by helicopter or by plane to get that care, we need to be there to get them the care they need as quickly as possible.

I would hope that the member opposite is not suggesting that we actually cut air ambulance services. We do know that the party is determined to cut health care. I hope this is not a signal that air ambulance is what they are planning to cut.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: The minister came awfully close but didn’t go quite as far as the Premier chooses to do in this place, and that is to absolutely and grossly misrepresent and tell—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I’d ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment he has just made.

Mr. Frank Klees: I withdraw that. The fact is, the Premier insists on speaking untruths about the intention—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Withdraw the comment, please.

Mr. Frank Klees: I will withdraw the comment and get back to the question.

We want to ensure that all of those essential emergency services through air ambulance are delivered in the most efficient, reliable and accountable way. Will the minister agree to call on the Auditor General to conduct a value audit on this organization, to ensure that in fact we are getting our money’s—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I just have to say it is still a mystery as to what exactly their plan is. They are not wanting to tell us what the plan is. But what we do know

for sure is that that is the party that wants to cut taxes. Whether they cut \$3 billion from the HST or \$6 billion from the HST or \$3 billion from the health premium, we know on this side of the House that you cannot cut taxes and fight the deficit without cutting services.

We also know that health care takes up almost half the spending in this province and you cannot cut \$3 billion or \$6 billion or \$9 billion or whatever-the-number-is billion dollars without cutting health care services.

It is completely disingenuous to suggest that you can fight the deficit, cut taxes and improve services, so as long as that's their plan, we will call them on it.

BREAST CANCER

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. We know that regular screening and early diagnosis are essential for surviving breast cancer. However, across the province today Ontarians have radically different access to care depending on the community in which they live.

In Sudbury, the Angels in Pink are holding their second annual fundraiser in order to buy medical equipment for breast MRI scans.

Medical procedures should be available based on need and not on the ability of the hospital to fundraise. Would the Premier agree with that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have a long, long tradition in this province of sharing capital costs between government funding and the local hospital. The local share has been used for as long as I'm aware of to help build the hospital infrastructure. I know that in communities across this province, local fundraising takes on an energy and enthusiasm in support for the hospitals that is really wonderful.

I am very happy to speak about how we're going to be improving breast cancer screening. There was an item that the finance minister included in the budget to actually expand breast cancer screening to high-risk women aged 30 and over. We are delighted at the leadership shown by the member from Sault Ste. Marie to really focus our attention on this. Expanding—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

1120

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, the minister may forget, but in London last year, patients, community members, nurses and New Democrats fought against cuts to breast cancer screening programs and breast cancer nurses in this member's own neck of the woods. Some services were saved, but the breast screening program was closed.

Why has the Premier been making people fight so hard just to access the medical services that they deserve?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite really does need to get with the program on this. We cannot afford to defend the status quo when it comes to health care. We need to make changes to improve health care for patients.

The member is completely misinformed about what happened in London. She is right: The breast screening program changed, but it did not affect the ability of women to get screened. In fact, every woman in Ontario who is eligible for breast screening is getting that care, and I would urge all women to take advantage of the breast screening program.

What she is talking about is a change in how that service was delivered. The evidence is very clear: We have the gold standard when it comes to breast screening. I'm very proud of our investments, and the addition to the budget is much, much appreciated by the women of Ontario.

LITERACY AND BASIC SKILLS

Mr. Dave Levac: My question is for Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. As I recall, a few months back there were a few articles about the necessity of continuing support for literacy skills training in Ontario. Many community groups had come forward asking for additional funding, and there were fears that the funding would be cut off after the federal stimulus funding was coming to an end in March of this year. I had asked you before about what the government was doing to continue the support.

In our communities, this is an essential service, particularly in my riding of Brant. In fact, in the riding of Brant, I know how much local organizations have worked—such great work. Literacy Link South Central, the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic school board, the Grand Erie school board, the Literacy Council of Brantford and District and Six Nations Polytechnic are valued and needed by our community residents.

I've said before, the investment in literacy is an extremely important aspect of who we are. I know we want to lead a knowledge-based economy.

I want to know from the minister: What have you been doing to deliver these skills that are—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. John Milloy: I want to thank the member for his question and publicly thank all those literacy providers across the province who provide such valuable service to literally thousands of Ontarians. I also want to thank members on all sides of this House who have been strong advocates for literacy.

The member is correct in pointing out that the federal government had provided short-term, time-limited stimulus funding which we used to help literacy providers. We were hoping that that funding would be extended because, although the economic conditions have improved, there's still a great deal of need out there. I publicly called on my federal counterpart to continue the funding. I was joined in that, I know, by members of the Legislature and literacy providers who went to the federal government and said that the effects of the recession demand that more money be invested.

Unfortunately, all of us were disappointed when there were not additional dollars in the federal budget. But we made a commitment to continue to work with—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Dave Levac: Thank you, Minister. I appreciate your dedication and devotion to ensuring that literacy is a prime part of our growth patterns here. We see the funding devoted in the basic skills level programs announced in the budget of 2011, and I appreciate that.

I've seen first-hand how effective literacy programs are in an individual's life. I have visited the Literacy Council of Branford and District, and I've met with individuals who have told me inspirational stories about dedication, devotion and hope. I want to say thank you on their behalf to thank you for doing so.

Their overall quality of life improves. It gives them the confidence to become engaged citizens. It raises their employment opportunities and provides them with an opportunity to apply for better-paying jobs even within their own companies. In fact, higher literacy rates can have a positive impact even on their health. I think high levels of literacy are associated with high levels of involvement and volunteerism.

Minister, can you please share with the rest of the House exactly what this government has done to provide continued support for our literacy groups and, indeed, for the future of the citizens of Ontario?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, I couldn't agree more with the honourable member about the importance of these literacy groups and the positive effect they've had in communities in terms of transforming lives. It was for that reason that I was very proud that the recent budget announced by the Minister of Finance contained an investment of an additional \$44 million for Ontario's literacy providers over the next three years.

This funding will help support literally thousands of Ontarians who are looking for additional literacy training, which will help them function in their lives, but will also prepare them for training and retraining programs, to complete their high school education, to move on to post-secondary education, to college and university.

I've had the opportunity to visit dozens and dozens of centres across the province that provide literacy training and I have seen lives literally transformed by these investments—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It's not funny.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Norm doesn't consider it funny.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Community Safety, a warning.

Please continue.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Premier. Premier, you're out of touch with the north and with Bill 151. The McGuinty government has a responsibility to everyone in Ontario, not just your downtown friends and campaign contributors. You have an obligation to hear dissenting voices and not to subvert the parliamentary process—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. A warning to the member from Peterborough.

Mr. Randy Hillier: —and not to subvert the parliamentary process for your own gain.

The parliamentary assistant cancelled the recommendations of the subcommittee, which approved northern consultations on your forestry LHIN experiments. The parliamentary assistant has prevented northerners from commenting on a bill that places their jobs and communities in jeopardy.

Premier, did you direct the parliamentary assistant to remove northern consultations because you're afraid to hear what northerners will say about your out-of-touch, failed forestry experiments?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm pleased to answer this question again. I want everybody to know how important this bill is and how hard Minister Gravelle has worked on this issue. He's been a huge advocate on behalf of northern Ontario. I would say that his work has been stellar.

It's important to know that the committee doesn't meet until April 11 and when they do, they're going to work on the existing consultations that have already occurred. I said earlier that they travelled quite extensively in northern Ontario prior to this committee going out. The consultations previously have been in Beardmore, Bower, Cochrane, Chapleau—these are northern communities—Fox Lake reserve and Constance Lake First Nation, Dryden, Fort Frances, Hearst, Hornepayne, Huntsville, Kapuskasing, Marathon, Midland, Parry Sound, Nipigon, North Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Sioux Lookout—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Once again, the parliamentary assistant says that he's heard enough, but northerners don't agree. The mayor of Timmins wants northern consultation. So does the mayor of Thunder Bay as well as the mayors of Ignace, Espanola, Sioux Lookout and Iroquois Falls.

The Ontario Forest Industries Association says that your tenure experiment will kill jobs and create uncertainty, and so does the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce. Why are you the only one who thinks the north doesn't deserve a voice on a bill that affects them and which kills their jobs?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: This wood supply competition is the largest wood supply competition ever seen in Ontario

and it's turned out to be extremely competitive. It's important that we get it right, and that's why we've taken the time to conduct a thorough evaluation.

We want our wood to work as quickly as possible. We're offering approximately nine million cubic metres of currently unused wood supply through this competition. We maintain continuous communication with our northern partners because this is a very important issue.

1130

I know that Minister Gravelle has worked very hard on this. We look forward to the input that we get in the travelling committee after April 11. I know Minister Gravelle will take your comments seriously and will work closely with the northern mayors to get this right. We have a lot of work to do, and we continue to accept those consultations going forward.

FIRE SAFETY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question's to the Premier. On Friday, a retirement home fire in Timmins took the life of a senior—the 45th life lost in a retirement home fire since 1980. Like so many in Ontario, this home did not have an automatic sprinkler system. Despite the fact that the province has called a fourth inquest into fire safety in retirement homes and has gone through a recent consultation process, again will the Premier at least commit to a date for action from this consultation process?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The Minister of Revenue.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I'm glad to answer this question. First, let me just say how I think everyone in this House is very saddened to hear the news of the passing of a senior. My thoughts and prayers are going out to the senior's family and friends. This was definitely a tragedy, but I do want to say how fortunate we are to have the emergency services, the fire and police of Timmins, who have all come together quickly to make sure that they protect the seniors who are homeless.

What we have is an investigation that's under way with the Ontario fire marshal. What's also very important is, we have a Retirement Homes Act that—unfortunately, that member who pretends to care about seniors didn't even vote for the support of these seniors.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Withdraw the comment, please.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I withdraw.

What's really important is that we have, for 20 years, talked about the Retirement Homes Act, and this government is standing up and protecting seniors.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: I brought Bill 92, the Mandating Sprinklers in All Ontario Retirement Homes Act, 2010, to this Legislature to fill the gaping hole in this government's Bill 21. This government is deliberately keeping Bill 92 from the public hearings that should have happened a long time ago, and while we wait for this

government to do the right thing, another senior has died in a retirement home fire.

Will the Premier and his government finally protect the lives of vulnerable seniors and legislate mandatory automatic sprinklers in all retirement homes before anyone else dies?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: To Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I think all members of the House have a concern about this matter. You know that we have launched—and it's now completed—a very active and comprehensive consultation with virtually everybody in the field moving forward and that all of the options that come out of that consultation are available for implementation. I want to assure the member and all members of the House of that.

We have heard from individuals who have resided in these homes, from those who own them, from fire officials and safety officials—from a large number of people. We are now gathering together all of the information we have from that, analyzing it and reviewing with them. I think you're going to see action that will be forthcoming from this kind of consultation that will add to the many things that have already been done to enhance fire safety in the province of Ontario.

I thank all members who have raised this either through private members' bills or in any way in this House through questions and statements. I think we'll all be able to move forward with the results of that consultation, which, as I say, has been more extensive than any that I can think of in a long, long time.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome a number of guests visiting the Legislature today from the Ontario Environment Industry Association, ONEIA. They extend an invitation to all members to attend their 11th annual environment industry day reception being held later today in the legislative dining room. Welcome to our guests.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1135 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity on behalf of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to welcome the students and staff from Regina Mundi Catholic secondary school in London who are visiting in the east and west galleries, and a special welcome to former page Cali Van Bommel. It's great to have you back, Cali.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Jim Wilson: The McGuinty government has led us down a path of unaffordable electricity, and opposition leader Tim Hudak and the PC caucus want to turn this high-priced disaster around. A Hudak-led PC government would treat energy policy as an economic policy instead of an expensive experiment that has caused rates to rise 75% since 2003 and a further 46% over the next five years.

Unlike the McGuinty government, which is forcing seniors on fixed incomes to pay higher prices for electricity during all peak hours, a PC government would give families the choice to opt out of time-of-use pricing.

A PC government would have a forensic audit into the debt retirement charge to see why this charge, worth \$1 billion per year, plus \$80,000 per year of HST, has not been retired. We won't allow it to become a permanent tax grab. We'll pull back the curtains and put the remaining total on hydro bills so that families can see how long it will take to pay it off, and if it is paid off, we'll take it off the bill altogether.

We'll scrap the Ontario Power Authority, a bloated government bureaucracy that costs ratepayers \$80 million per year and an agency whose sole mandate is to drive up prices up.

We'll ensure that the interests of consumers come first by creating a dedicated consumer advocate at the Ontario Energy Board to represent the interests of ratepayers and ensure political interests don't trump a family's ability to pay.

For those concerned by industrial wind and solar farms, families can count on us to build them only in places where they are welcomed and wanted and at prices ratepayers can afford.

These are practical ideas that will help Ontario families who are—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Guelph will please come to order.

The member for Ottawa—Orléans.

PAKISTAN DAY

Mr. Phil McNeely: I was honoured to attend, along with my colleague Yasir Naqvi, the Canada Pakistan Association of the National Capital Region celebration of Pakistan Day. The celebration was held in Ottawa on April 2, just last Saturday.

Sana Syed from my riding of Ottawa—Orléans was master of ceremonies. She did a wonderful job, together with co-emcee Imran Zaidi.

Senator Jaffer spoke with great emotion about the history of this nation since its creation in 1947. She spoke eloquently of the hardships recently suffered by this young nation—the devastating earthquake, the recent

floods, and the Afghanistan war, which is fought as well in Pakistan.

With all these challenges, the 300,000 Canadians of Pakistani origin are proud Canadians and remain proud of their homeland.

Ottawa—Orléans is blessed with families of Pakistani origin, and we treasure the leadership of Mashooda Syed, president of the Canada Pakistan Association, Qamar Masood, president of the multicultural committee, and Saeed Bokhari, president of the Cumberland Islamic Society. They will be opening up a new mosque in June this year.

Part of the evening was dedicated to a play on the history of Pakistan, and the youth from the community certainly did an excellent job taking us from the founding of the country to the 9/11 tragedy and to today.

Several awards were presented to worthy recipients, distinguished Pakistani Canadians: Senator Salma Ataullahjan, honorary CPA lifetime member award; Serge Buy.

The evening included a fashion show, excellent Pakistani food and a musical program. All in all, this was an enjoyable and learned evening.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Ted Arnott: Today, I wish to acknowledge the outstanding work done by two of my colleagues: the member for Simcoe—Grey and the member for Oxford.

The member for Oxford and our leader, Tim Hudak, have been working in co-operation with agricultural organizations and farmers for several years to push for a business risk management program.

On June 3, 2010, the member for Simcoe—Grey brought a motion forward in this House calling on the McGuinty government to show support for farmers by acting to create a comprehensive business risk management program, jointly funded by farmers and governments. The motion was supported by farmers, including the Ontario Cattlemen's Association, the Ontario PC caucus and our agriculture critic, my colleague the member for Oxford.

Unfortunately, the Liberal government defeated the motion. The member for Oxford kept the pressure on the government, and several times during question period he called on the agriculture minister to stop being a lobbyist and do the right thing for farmers. I completely believe that it was the work of the members for Simcoe—Grey and Oxford, in addition to the leadership of agriculture organizations and farmers, that led the government to finally adopt the Ontario PC plan.

OUT OF THE DARKNESS
MEMORIAL WALK

Mr. Bill Mauro: In 2005, after she lost her son Steven to suicide, Margaret Hajdinjak realized that something had to be done. Suicide happens far too frequently, and the impact on a community, family and friends is devas-

tating. Margaret realized that these deaths are often silent because of the stigma attached to losing a loved one in this way. She believed that people should feel comfortable talking about how their loved one died and should be able to get the support they need. Margaret knew that saying nothing to a family that lost someone to suicide is like not acknowledging that their loved one had lived.

On Sunday, May 1, at 6 p.m., Out of the Darkness, the first annual memorial walk for suicide awareness and prevention, will be held in Thunder Bay. The problem they are confronting is very real. In 2007, there were 3,611 reported suicides in Canada, and according to the Canadian Mental Health Association, suicides account for 16% of all deaths for people aged 16 to 44. The goal of the walk is to help raise awareness, to begin removing the stigma attached to suicide, to support families and friends who have lost loved ones in this way and to recognize and remember the victims.

I want to thank Leadership Thunder Bay, who took a proposal from Margaret and lent their support and guidance to the working group to launch Out of the Darkness. A special acknowledgment to Margaret Hajdinjak, Gregory Brenk, Nancy Campbell, Gloria Deck, Robin Cawlishaw, Samantha Moir, Fern Tarzia and Jessica Cordes, as well as all the other volunteers and supporters who are helping this important cause.

Once again, the walk is taking place Sunday, May 1, at 6 p.m. at Confederation College. I encourage residents of Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario to support this effort and turn the Out of the Darkness walk into a significant event in Thunder Bay. As a community, we need to raise awareness of this issue, we need to support those affected by this tragedy and we need to support those who find themselves in difficulty.

ELECTRICITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Randy Hillier: In the last few months, microFIT participants have been receiving notices that Hydro One will be unable to provide them with an offer to connect because of system constraints and that system upgrades are necessary before any of these connections proceed. People across Ontario have invested their life savings into the Premier's green energy dream and are getting burned when they find out that they signed on for nothing more than a McGuinty government backtrack. The government knew the capacity of Hydro One, but made promises that they knew they couldn't keep.

For Paul Mayell of Inverary, the Premier's green energy dream has turned into his personal nightmare. Paul had an agreement to connect. He had a fully signed connection agreement with this government, but when weather created installation delays, his 180-day agreement expired. The government informed Paul that there would be no problem and a resubmission would allow him to be connected. When he did resubmit, mere days from the expiry of his 180-day agreement, suddenly there were system constraints that prevented Hydro One from

connecting him. The constraints miraculously appeared over just a few days.

Nobody can trust a government that says one thing but does another. This government must abide by the agreements they have made and keep their promises to the people of Ontario.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a very important announcement. Finally, after waiting for 16 years, through gridlock, crowded buses and pollution, the Eglinton transit line is back. Ever since Mike Harris made the biggest blunder in transit history when he cancelled the subway in 1995, the community has suffered from massive amounts of fumes from diesel, buses, cars, trucks etc.

Now they can breathe a sigh of relief. The Eglinton Crosstown LRT is back on track, and the community will be able to enjoy the benefits of modern rapid transit. It will run 20 kilometres underground from Black Creek to Kennedy station. One hundred per cent of the funding is coming from the provincial government, and 80,000 families will also benefit from good-paying jobs for the next 10 years of construction, even the families in Thunder Bay, who build the cars, and local small businesses along Eglinton will also find new shoppers and customers.

In co-operation with the city of Toronto and Mayor Ford, last week the Premier announced this critical and long-awaited good news that the Eglinton underground LRT will be moving forward ASAP.

1510

This important investment through the heart of Toronto will take vehicle pollution off the streets and create fast, clean, rapid transit in the Eglinton corridor, connecting some of Toronto's best neighbourhoods. Mount Dennis, Fairbank, Oakwood Village, Marlee Village, Forest Hill, Chaplin Estates, and Yonge and Eglinton will be served by this long-awaited improvement in their city and in transit.

Thank you, Mr. Premier, thank you, Mr. Mayor, and thank you to the people of Toronto.

REGINA MUNDI COLLEGE

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Last Friday, I visited a grade 10 civics class at Regina Mundi secondary school in the London District Catholic School Board in the London area. Today, the same students are here at Queen's Park, so I want to welcome them.

I want to commend grade 10 student Layan Reslan for having taken the initiative to arrange this visit as part of a project she is working on for her civics class. She contacted my office and asked if I would come and speak to the class about what it's like to be a politician at Queen's Park, and I was happy to be there.

The students in the class, taught by Michael Pepe, were bright and thoughtful, and we had an excellent discussion not only about my experience as a member of

provincial Parliament, but also about the importance of civic engagement and active citizenship for young people, irrespective of their political affiliation. These students demonstrated a real interest and engagement with issues affecting them.

I want to thank Layan Reslan for inviting me to join her class and to congratulate all the students, Mr. Pepe and all the teachers who came today for their ability to understand political life, and for convincing other students to participate in political activities. It is important for young students and young people to engage to make sure we have a bright, strong and vibrant future.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Howard Hampton: Forest sector communities across northern Ontario are in shock at the behaviour of the McGuinty Liberal government. Workers and contractors in communities like Sioux Lookout, Dubreuilville and Wawa cannot believe that the McGuinty Liberals would take away the wood supply of their local forest product mill without having the decency to come to the community and talk to the workers, the contractors and the suppliers who will lose their jobs, their businesses and their livelihoods as a result of these closed-door decisions made in Toronto.

People across the north are shocked at the arrogance of the Liberal government that will change something as fundamental as forest tenure and forest licensing without holding public hearings in the northern Ontario communities concerned. Imagine: The McGuinty Liberals will hold a couple of days of hearings in Toronto, where almost no one will be affected by the forest tenure legislation and almost no one cares, but will not hold hearings in northern Ontario communities where tens of thousands of people will be affected by the proposed changes, more evidence that the McGuinty Liberal government is totally out of touch with the interests and aspirations of the people of northern Ontario.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Kuldip Kular: Our Prime Minister recently announced a \$4.2-billion loan guarantee for the hydro project in Labrador. In response yesterday, the Premier said that Ottawa ought to treat Ontario the same way it does other parts of the country.

Ontarians contribute \$6 billion every year to the federal government and only get \$1 billion back. In fact, 40% of all federal money comes from this province and our province is doing the heavy lifting when it comes to reducing Canada's output of greenhouse gases.

Together, we are rebuilding 80% of our energy system over the next 20 years. We are doing more to renew our aging energy infrastructure than any other province and so far we have done it alone. The McGuinty government's long-term energy plan is making Ontario an international clean energy leader and creating thousands of jobs.

Now the federal government wants to use Ontario's money to pay for this kind of energy restructuring elsewhere, but not right here at home. Ontarians won't stand by and let their tax dollars subsidize electricity rates elsewhere. Our Premier made it clear that he will fight for Ontario taxpayers, but the leader of the official opposition has so far refused to take a stand for Ontario families.

This government has been defending Ontarians at the federal level. I wonder why the Leader of the Opposition won't do the same.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated April 5, 2011, from the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

PETITIONS

COYOTES

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas coyote predation is a growing problem in rural Ontario, especially on farms; and

"Whereas there are documented reports that coyotes are attacking people and pets and the attacks are getting more aggressive; and

"Whereas as many as 6,000 lambs and sheep alone are killed by coyotes on Ontario farms every year; and

"Whereas these losses are seriously impacting farmers' incomes; and

"Whereas the current control measures authorized by the Ministry of Natural Resources under the municipal financial incentives for control of coyote predation program are cumbersome and impossible to adhere to;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario government minimize predator losses by implementing a province-wide coyote control program that includes a \$200 bounty for each coyote carcass and allow counties to implement their own proof-of-kill collection system."

Many people have signed this from all over my riding and I'm giving it to Devan.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning, a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients...; and

"Whereas," since October 2009, "insured PET scans" are being performed "in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Jimmy to bring it to the Clerk.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: It's my pleasure to read this petition:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all Ontarians have the right to a safe home environment; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario works to reduce all barriers in place that prevent victims of domestic violence from fleeing abusive situations; and

"Whereas the Residential Tenancies Act does not take into consideration the special circumstances facing a tenant who is suffering from abuse; and

"Whereas those that live in fear for their personal safety and that of their children should not be financially penalized for the early termination of their residential leases;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Bill 53, the Escaping Domestic Violence Act, 2010, be adopted so that victims of domestic violence be afforded a mechanism for the early termination of their lease to allow them to leave an abusive relationship and find a safe place for themselves and their children to call home."

I very much agree with this petition, affix my signature and send it to the table via page Daniel.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: This is a petition calling on the Ministry of Transportation to install traffic lights at the intersection of Highway 12 at Fairgrounds Road, Orillia.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the intersection of Highway 12 at Fairgrounds Road in Orillia is a main traffic link for Notre Dame Catholic School, for the Odas Park fairgrounds and a number of local businesses; and

"Whereas we are concerned about the increased congestion and safety of the travelling public and the transportation of children to Notre Dame Catholic School;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to have the Ministry of Transportation install traffic lights at the intersection of Highway 12 and Fairgrounds Road, Orillia."

I'm pleased to sign this and give it to Leighton to present to the table.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from people all over Ontario:

« Attendu que la mission du commissaire aux services en français est de veiller à ce que la population reçoive en français des services de qualité du gouvernement de l'Ontario et de surveiller l'application de la Loi sur les services en français;

« Attendu que le commissaire a le mandat de mener des enquêtes indépendantes selon la Loi sur les services en français;

« Attendu que contrairement au vérificateur général, à l'ombudsman, au commissaire à l'environnement et au commissaire à l'intégrité qui, eux, relèvent de l'Assemblée législative, le commissaire aux services en français relève de la ministre déléguée aux services en français;

1520

Ils demandent à l'Assemblée législative « de changer les pouvoirs du commissaire aux services en français afin qu'il relève directement de l'Assemblée législative. »

J'appuie cette pétition et je demande à Gemma de l'amener à la table des greffiers.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Phil McNeely: The petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario is getting out of coal for generating electricity; and

"Whereas the smoke cessation legislation has decreased second-hand smoke; and

"Whereas the incidence of asthma has decreased by 30% in children from two to seven years old; and

"Whereas Ontario is a leader in world governments in getting out of coal; and

"Whereas the doctors from CHEO supported the ban on cosmetic use of pesticides; and

"Whereas the ban on the cosmetic use of pesticides has reduced the chemicals in our environment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To encourage Ontarians to support government to maintain the environmental action that is leading to a more healthy environment."

I'm very pleased to put my signature on this and send it up with Sydney.

RURAL AND NORTHERN SCHOOLS

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to save rural and northern schools in Ontario:

"Whereas rural and northern schools are an important part of Ontario; and

"Whereas rural and northern schools are widely recognized for their high educational standards and intimate learning experience; and

"Whereas the frameworks of rural and northern schools are different from large urban schools and therefore deserve to be governed by a separate rural and northern school policy; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised during the 2007 election that he would keep rural and northern schools open when he declared that, 'Rural schools help keep communities strong, which is why we're not only committed to keeping them open—but strengthening them'; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty found \$12 million to keep swimming pools open in Toronto schools but hasn't found any money to keep rural and northern schools open in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Education support the citizens of rural and northern Ontario and suspend all accommodation reviews until the province develops a rural and northern school policy that recognizes the values of these schools in their communities."

I've signed it and I will give it to Gemma.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas protecting and preserving Ontario's cemeteries is a shared responsibility and the foundation of a civilized society; and

"Whereas failure to safeguard one of our last remaining authentic cultural heritage resources, Ontario's inactive cemeteries, would be disastrous for the continuity of the historical record and our collective culture in this province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 126, Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2010, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

I agree with this and will send it to the clerks' table.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the residents of Ontario feel that this current Liberal government is directly responsible for their rising household debt by slapping them with higher taxes, such as the health tax and the HST, higher fees, higher hydro bills and higher auto insurance premiums; and

"Whereas the people have lost faith in their government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government immediately resign and call an election."

I sign this also and give it to Jimmy.

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, between 1869 and 1939, more than 100,000 British home children arrived in Canada from group homes and orphanages in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland; and

"Whereas the story of the British home children is one of challenge, determination and perseverance; and

"Whereas due to their remarkable courage, strength and perseverance, Canada's British home children endured and went on to lead healthy and productive lives and contributed immeasurably to the development of Ontario's economy and prosperity; and

"Whereas the government of Canada has proclaimed 2010 as the Year of the British Home Child and Canada Post will recognize it with a commemorative stamp;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 12, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Jim Brownell on March 23, 2010, an act to proclaim September 28 of each year as Ontario home child day."

I agree with this petition, and I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Steve Clark: I'd like to thank the Food For All Food Bank in Prescott for this petition. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas agriculture plays an important role in Ontario's economy and deserves investment;

"Whereas PC MPP Bob Bailey has introduced a significant tax credit for farmers who donate agricultural goods to food banks, helping farmers, food banks and people in need; and

"Whereas over 25 million pounds of fresh produce is disposed of or plowed back into Ontario's fields each

year while food banks across Ontario struggle to feed those in need;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call MPP Bob Bailey's private member's bill, Bill 78, the Taxation Amendment Act (Food Bank Donation Tax Credit for Farmers), 2010, to committee immediately for consideration and then on to third reading and implementation without delay."

I feel very proud to sign it in support, and I'll send it to the table with page Travis.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I have also signed it and will send it with Gemma.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Historical Society, founded in 1888, is a not-for-profit corporation, incorporated by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, April 1, 1899, with a mandate to identify, protect, preserve and promote Ontario's history; and

"Whereas protecting and preserving Ontario's cemeteries is a shared responsibility and the foundation of a civilized society; and

"Whereas the Legislature failed to enact Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, which would have prohibited the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Cooley-Hatt Cemetery (circa 1786) is located in the Niagara Escarpment plan within Ontario's greenbelt plan in Ancaster, city of Hamilton; and

"Whereas this is one of the earliest surviving pioneer cemeteries in Ontario, with approximately 99 burials, including at least one veteran of the War of 1812;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government of Ontario must take whatever action is necessary to prevent the desecration of any part of this sacred burial ground for real estate development."

I agree with this petition and shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

RURAL SCHOOLS

Mr. Jim Wilson: "Petition to Save Duntroon Central Public School and All Other Rural Schools in Clearview Township:

"Whereas Duntroon Central Public School is an important part of Clearview township and the surrounding area; and

"Whereas Duntroon Central Public School is widely recognized for its high educational standards and intimate learning experience; and

"Whereas the frameworks of rural schools are different from urban schools and therefore deserve to be governed by a separate rural school policy; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised during the 2007 election that he would keep rural schools open when he declared that, 'Rural schools help keep communities strong, which is why we're not only committed to keeping them open—but strengthening them'; and

"Whereas Premier McGuinty found \$12 million to keep school swimming pools open in Toronto but hasn't found any money to keep rural schools open in Simcoe-Grey;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Education support the citizens of Clearview township and suspend the Simcoe County District School Board ARC 2010:01 until the province develops a rural school policy that recognizes the value of schools in the rural communities of Ontario."

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have another petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the picketing of the homes of people with intellectual disabilities alienates people from their autonomy; security; privacy; relationships with staff, neigh-

bours and community; and also causes discrimination and harm to citizens who should be free to enjoy their homes without harassment and intimidation;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To support Bill 83 and prohibit the picketing of vulnerable people’s residences during a strike.”

I’ve also signed this and will give it to Leighton.

1530

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: This is a petition to restore laboratory services in Elmvale.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the consolidation of medical laboratories in rural areas is causing people to travel further and wait longer for services; and

“Whereas it is the responsibility of the Ontario government to ensure that Ontarians have equal access to all health care services; and

“Whereas rural Ontario continues to get shortchanged when it comes to health care: doctor shortages, smaller hospitals, less pharmaceutical services, lack of transportation and now medical laboratory services; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government continues to increase taxes to make up for misspent tax dollars, collecting \$15 billion over the last six years from the Liberal health tax, ultimately forcing Ontarians to pay more while receiving less;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the McGuinty government stop the erosion of public health care services and ensure equal access to medical laboratories for all Ontarians including the people of Elmvale.”

I agree with the petition and I will sign it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2011 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 4, 2011, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: First, let me advise you that I’ll be sharing my time with the member from Nipissing.

I’m delighted to spend a few minutes today to talk about our budget. There are two or three planks that are really important, that we should not lose focus on, in this budget. One of them—coming from a rural community, and not trying to be selfish—that I want to spend a little bit of time on is the risk management piece. Farmers have been lobbying me for quite some time, and I’m delighted to say that we were able to deliver, although we waited a considerable amount of time to have our federal

government come to the table to strengthen the risk management. Some four years ago the grains and oilseeds came to the province once again, when the doors were closed by our federal counterparts, to show some leadership. Well, this government did, and by doing that—it had expired less than a year ago, and this government committed to renewing that commitment for one year, and hence the budget now; not only are we going to extend the grains and oilseeds, but we’re going to go to the other sectors in the agricultural industry as well.

What does this really mean? We talked about agriculture as being important. It will create for our farming community the stable resources so that they can afford to plant their seeds and grow their seeds. Sometimes, when it comes harvest time, whether it’s weather or economic conditions around the world—frankly, the farmer who farms right behind my house has no control over those jurisdictions, and we’ve seen in the past where it was cheaper for them not to harvest their corn or soybeans because of some of those prices that were so bad.

So what is that going to allow that particular farmer to do? When he plants those seeds and he grows them, he will at least have some income from this risk management—by the way, farmers are contributing to it—to go to the bank and pay his costs or at least what it cost him to plant those seeds.

I want to give credit to the folks of the farming community in my riding. I’m not a farmer, I will admit, but I do represent a predominantly rural riding. They met with me a number of times, trying to explain the importance of this to me. Frankly, they provided a lot of good advice that allowed me, within our government caucus, along with my other rural colleagues, to lobby for this really important plank in the budget.

I would just say this: Even today, during members’ statements, some of the members from the opposition will brag—I’m going to say the word “brag”—that it was they who held our feet to the fire to make this happen. I have a really hard time, because I remember, back in my municipal days, when a certain member who wants to take credit from the other side happened to be—although for a very short time; he was given marching orders. You can tell, because he was there for a very, very short time. He closed an agricultural assistance office—guess where? In Brighton, a community I was mayor of. I had to fight like you-know-what to retain two specialists. And do you know what made it even worse? The member that was sitting for Northumberland at that time—that’s the name of the riding—a certain Dr. Galt, who was a member in this House, used to run that agricultural office. He was the person who directed it. He stood here—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: And the Minister of Agriculture still closed it. Wow.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: He still closed it. If they want to take some credit, credit should be due where credit is due. As a minister, his credit should be to have destroyed some of the agricultural components that made our farmers what they are today. We’ve been rebuilding.

I could go on, because it really bothers me when I hear them speak to that extent. During my tenure as mayor, while they were in government, they closed hospitals. They closed two hospitals, although they did rebuild one. I give them credit; they did rebuild one. But they closed two hospitals. They destroyed the life of Port Hope. They took their hospital away. If you're going to take credit, take credit for what you've really done.

They closed a driver test centre that served the west end of my riding in Port Hope. Guess what I did today? I opened a brand new driver test centre. It took some 15 years, but we did it. If they want to take credit where credit is due, then I think they should talk about their past record.

I see that I'm running out of time. Part of our budget commitment was to enhance the education system we have. I want to tell you that when we formed government in 2003, I had a school in Port Hope with mould. They had to move kids out of that school. Guess what's in that same school—actually across the street, because there was a better piece of property. There is a brand new school. There are five brand new schools in my riding. I don't think there were any new schools in my riding while they were in government. I think that's the type of credit that they need to look forward to taking, because I can tell you that people from Northumberland—Quinte West don't forget those things.

I just want to go back to the municipality of Port Hope a little bit. They lost a hospital, because their hospital restructuring commission deemed that hospital gone. What happened in the last four or five years? They have a community health centre which this government funded: over \$2 million for the bricks and mortar and over \$2 million a year to keep the community health centre running. Just a few months ago, the Minister of Health had the opportunity to be in the riding to open up a brand new diabetes centre in Port Hope. That has been expanded. As a matter of fact, I just met with the CEO yesterday.

The demand has been extraordinary. The need is there, now that we have a diabetes centre in the west end of my riding, for more space, and I'm certainly going to work towards trying to achieve that goal.

I'm just going to touch on a couple of other minor things. Mental health: We had an all-party committee that travelled the province for some length. Something that was really scattered within that mental health provision to our folks: We've made a commitment for the future of this province that that's one of the things we need to tackle, and that commitment was in the budget.

Breast cancer screening: We talked about it over and over and over again. There's money in the budget to provide that breast screening process to women, down to 30 years young—not old; young.

So we've made some huge strides in this budget. I am glad that the opposition is going to support it because they want to support risk management, frankly, and I'm delighted to hear that. But for them to take credit, I really have an issue.

1540

I want to go back to risk management, because it is so important in my riding. I want to thank those farmers—the hog—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Cattle.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: —and the cattle.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: And seeds.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: And the grains and oilseeds. I think they had me on speed-dial—and horticultural. They had me on speed-dial, and I'm glad they did it. I'm really glad they did it, because now they have some stability. I could go on by reading all the comments they made, but I'm going to leave some time for my friend from Nipissing.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Nipissing.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: It's my privilege today to speak to our 2011 budget. Certainly Ontario is turning the corner.

I share my colleague from Northumberland's enthusiasm about risk management. I know that Klaus Wand and his family up in the Powassan-Trout Creek area will be very excited about this. They are strong agriculturalists in my region.

As the member for Northumberland had outlined a number of priority areas that he wanted to focus in on, I want to focus in on a couple today. One would be children's mental health, which I think is incredibly important. I'm delighted to see that our government is moving forward with that initiative and ensuring that families get the support that they need when they need it. I know many families who have been impacted by mental health issues—their children and their youth—and I think this is an incredibly important investment by our government.

I also want to focus in on a smaller issue that has not been raised as much, and that's the funding that we're seeing going towards literacy. While the federal government deserted this particular area, we are seeing a new investment in literacy of \$44 million over three years, and I think this is an exciting initiative. I am a huge proponent and supporter of the North Bay Literacy Council. Jane Jackson and all of her volunteers and learners are a wonderful group of people who add so much to our community.

Madam Speaker, I recently had the chance to meet with some of those learners when they had literacy day here. I think you might have been there as well. It was a very heart-warming day to see those learners expressing how important it was for them to go back and get that extra help and that education to get them back on track.

In support of the North Bay Literacy Council, a few weeks ago I had the opportunity to play Scrabble at Northgate Square in North Bay. I challenged our new radio show hosts, Joël Lamoureux and Kevin Oschefski—Kevin and Joël in the Morning, who are on EZ Rock—to play me in a game of Scrabble. I'm proud to say that I won.

We did, of course, have a small wager on the game. If I won, they had to talk about the literacy council every morning on the radio—about what great work they did, about how anybody could come and be a learner, and how people could volunteer—and they lived up to the bargain and did, every single day. If they won, I was supposed to go on the air with them for an hour during their Longest Morning Ever, which lasted 53 hours, and/or I was to speak about them in the House. So this is my opportunity to give a hats-off to Kevin and Joël in the Morning on EZ Rock, who spent so much time supporting another great organization which has had a lot of support from this government, which is children and youth with disabilities.

They did the Longest Morning Ever last week; it was 53 hours of live radio, with the two of them quite tired by the end but holding up, and supporting a couple of great organizations in our community: NADY, the Nipissing Association for Disabled Youth, which supports disabled youth in our community, and Rotary for Kids, which works hand in hand with NADY in providing support. Over 53 hours of radio, they managed to raise \$92,000, which is incredibly impressive. I had an opportunity to chat with a lot of the students, a lot of the youth and children who benefit from this fundraising, which all stays right in the North Bay area and provides supports to families with children with disabilities.

They had a chance to talk to Bryan Ceppetelli, Shawn Venasse and Mathew Vigna, who are my guys, who live at Cam's Place and who are just wonderful young men and have this lovely new home that we opened last year, with some support from the government and their families. It provided them with a wonderful living arrangement. Lori Venasse, Shawn's mom, was there, and his sister—a whole bunch of family members.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention Dooley and Lucie Ricci, who were the founders of NADY 30-some years ago. They ran it out of their basement for years and years, and only last year, with the opening of our new children's treatment centre, found themselves with a new home and an office at One Kids Place.

Dooley and Lucie were there, hugging and supporting everyone through the 53 hours. Hats off to them, to the NADY group and to Rotary for Kids. Our local Rotary Club, Madam Speaker, as I'm sure in your riding and everyone's riding, contributes so much to the community. They were all there to support Joël and Kevin, who managed to raise \$92,000, as I said, and who did yeoman's service for over 53 hours. Kudos to the boys for doing that.

I have now met at least part of my commitment. I did show up at 9 o'clock at night, during the 53 hours, to try and help them out, but they were so tired that I think they forgot to ask me to come on the air with them. So that was okay; I didn't have to do the whole hour.

These are the types of community events that bring people together in support of wonderful organizations like NADY and support our children with disabilities.

Through a variety of programs, our government has supported these children as well: through the Passport program; through the child tax benefit; and through our funding of One Kids Place, which received funding through this government to actually create a home for these children and services. It is one of the landmark institutions in our riding that I'm particularly proud to leave as part of the legacy of my time here, in providing those families with those services that they needed.

I think we are turning a corner. I think this budget is setting us on the right track to move forward. I'm delighted to see that there was another \$10 million in it for the north as well, through the—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Comments and questions?

Mr. Jim Wilson: I just want to say to the honourable member from Northumberland—Quinte West that, yes, we do support the farmers' business risk management plan, and you're the ones who are late to the table, frankly.

Here's what my resolution read in this House in June of last year—which you voted against; we voted in favour. And it wasn't until Tim Hudak said at both the 2009 plowing match and the 2010 plowing match that he fully supported this business risk management plan being expanded to all commodity groups—finally, you guys came around when Tim, once again, just days before the budget, reiterated the fact that if you didn't do it in this budget, he would do it, if he had the opportunity to become Premier of this province in October.

Here's the resolution that you voted down: "That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario act to help farmers by supporting reforms to the national AgriStability program at this year's meeting of the federal and provincial Ministers of Agriculture, and by acting to create a comprehensive business risk management program, jointly funded by farmers and governments, as presented to the province of Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition, and that regardless of any other level of government, the provincial share of the business risk management program be in place for the 2009 production year, which is currently being marketed."

We were way out ahead on this. I firmly believe the Liberal government would not have done anything. You would have kept your excuse that you were using for the last three years that the federal government had to come to the table before you would bring this program in. It was certainly Tim Hudak saying he would do it that made you change your minds.

It's just like when he came out with buck a beer; three or four days later you came out with the liberalization of our liquor laws. You're copycats, you're not leaders, and you'll be replaced in October.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I listened with some interest to the member for Nipissing and, as well, the member for Northumberland—Quinte West. I have to give government

members credit. They have a job to do; their job is to try to sell the government's budget.

But let me respond from my perspective. I represent constituents who have a very difficult time paying the hydro bill every month. In fact, I talk to seniors and to low-income people who are saying, "What do I do? Do I simply eat macaroni for the rest of the week in order that I can pay my hydro bill?" That's where it's gotten to.

Those people got absolutely nothing in this budget. They were hoping for some kind of relief from a hydro bill that just continues to skyrocket and skyrocket and skyrocket, and those people got absolutely nothing. In fact, they're shocked when you point out to them that their hydro bill is going to accelerate by another 50% over the next few years.

The second reality is this: People who are now being forced to pay the HST, who have to pay the HST on the hydro bill, who have to pay the HST on the heating bill, who are watching food prices escalate through the roof—I'm talking here about people who are forced to rely upon Ontario Works benefits or Ontario disability support benefits. They're seeing their cost of living go up by not 1%, not 2%, but by 5% and 10% a year, if not more. I'm left, at the end of this budget, to ask: What happens to those people? Because there was hardly anything, if anything at all, in this budget to help those people, compared to the huge cost-of-living increases.

1550

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Essex.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I'm pleased to comment on the words of my colleagues from Northumberland—Quinte West and from Nipissing, and I'm equally pleased that they mentioned the risk management program.

The member for Simcoe—Grey seemed to have a few words about it. He reminds me of the rooster who takes credit for the sun rising. We started our risk management program with the grains and oilseeds long before any resolution or any comment came from the other side. We asked the other commodity groups to bring to us a plan, because they in fact wanted one. But the folks who are really responsible for it are the farmers. They're the ones who brought it to us; we were willing to listen.

I think that some credit should go to our Minister of Agriculture for her foresight to listen to them, to understand what their needs are. I think also there should be some credit to our rural caucus, who continually brought this up. I don't recall the opposition bringing it up in the pre-budget hearings, but they may have. I think the rural caucus did a lot of work, because we sat down with the finance minister and the Minister of Agriculture and echoed the words of our farm community.

Really, it's when the rubber hits the road that you should take credit for something. Frankly and simply, it's this government, through Premier McGuinty, Finance Minister Duncan, Agriculture Minister Mitchell and the rural caucus, that took it by the horns and put it in place, and we have put it in place permanently. When the

national agri-group was mentioned—we only wish that the federal government would do the same.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Northumberland—Quinte West made some remarks, but I do want to read it to the point of—we know that there is code language in here for "tax increases," and it's an election budget.

Here's what my constituents in the riding of Durham—this is an email that I'm reading. It's very appropriate here.

"What is this government doing to taxpayers?" This is an email from Wanda Shea. "What are you people doing with our money? We pay enough taxes that the government should give us a break. Stop giving severance packages to ... any person who works for the government and does a lousy job. If they are fired or step down, why are they given \$300,000 or more? I am finding it hard to put gas in my car to get to work. Grocery shopping is a joke. Why doesn't the government wake up? We are going to have to gather ... and protest the waste from the government. You people are elected and sit back and write letters." You don't do anything. "It would mean jobs for everyone. Maybe this is the end as predicted in the Bible. I cannot see a future. Tell Dalton [McGuinty] we are pissed off about the money"—pardon me for that—"he threw away on windmills."

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Pardon me; I'm just reading it here. I apologize.

"We are pissed off about the HST, green fees, payroll taxes, smart meters, health premiums etc. We have had enough. Please do something for your people. We don't deserve what is being done to us" right now.

This is a real story about a real constituent. You're living on your high horse and you refuse to listen. I'm sure that this constituent—there are thousands of them in Ontario, in your riding and in your riding.

Stop raising taxes to solve every problem. The Liberal legacy is clear: tax and spend. There's an insatiable appetite. They have their hand in everybody's pocket. I can't believe that the people of Ontario haven't thrown you out already.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Northumberland—Quinte West has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Let me thank the members from Simcoe—Grey, Kenora—Rainy River, Essex and Durham for their comments.

The member from Simcoe—Grey said that they were off the pole. They passed a motion some time back. He seems to forget that they were here for eight years prior to that, and I think if he was paying attention to my comments, that's when they stripped everything out of agriculture. They were here for eight years.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: They destroyed it.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: They destroyed it. They closed an agricultural office near my riding in Peterborough.

I would say that the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills would probably support this, but I wonder what Jack MacLaren will think. I think he probably wrote their notes. I know that the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills would probably be in this House today—

Interjections.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I think we touched a sour note. I really think we touched a note.

My good friend from Durham, for whom I do have some respect—we're sort of neighbours—not once did he mention farmers. I believe he has—

Mr. Khalil Ramal: He's anti-farmer.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: He's probably anti-farmer.

They can talk a good talk sometimes, but I tell you, they're very, very clear. The people can see right through their rhetoric. How much are they going to cut to destroy our programs? That movie played between 1998 until 2003. I'm not sure the people of Ontario are ready to play that movie again. We've come a long way; we're not going to go backwards.

I know that there are a couple of things they really want to support, and I'm counting on them to come to the plate and do the right thing and support this budget because there's just so much to help Ontarians here that we cannot ignore them anymore.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm going to have up to an hour tomorrow to speak to the budget bill, so I will be sharing my time today with the member from Wellington–Halton Hills and the member from Thornhill.

What I would like to do is move an amendment to the budget motion. The amendment is that the motion moved by the Minister of Finance on March 29, 2011, “that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government” be amended by deleting the words following “that this House” and adding thereto the following: “cannot support a budget that will increase reckless spending and waste and will result in tax increases or new taxes to pay for it.

“Further, the budget fails:

“—to provide relief for Ontario families; and

“—to give small businesses a break by appointing a member of cabinet responsible for meeting measurable, hard targets on red tape reductions; and

“—to end corporate welfare schemes that pick winners and losers in the marketplace; and

“—to fix the broken arbitration system and ensure that public sector agreements reflect the ability of families to pay the bills; and

“—to scrap the wasteful LHIN bureaucracy and the bloated Ontario Power Authority and invest those tax dollars into front-line services; and

“—to halt the doubling of Ontario's debt.”

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Mr. Miller has moved that the motion moved by the Minister of Finance on March 29, 2011, “that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government” be

amended by deleting the words following “that this House” and adding thereto the following: “cannot support a budget that will increase reckless spending and waste and will result in tax increases or new taxes to pay for it.

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“—to scrap the wasteful LHIN bureaucracy and the bloated Ontario Power Authority and invest those tax dollars into front-line services; and

“—to halt the doubling of Ontario's debt.”

The member for Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to speak in support of the amendment that has just been tabled. I'm glad to have this chance, on behalf of the people of Wellington–Halton Hills, to respond today to the McGuinty government's budget, which I believe will be this government's last budget, and deservedly so.

1600

I say this because I believe the people of Ontario will see it for what it is: a work of fiction, arguably even a fantasy, and, without a doubt, a failure. Much like the government that authored it, this document is dishonest.

Ontario families have been through more—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I have to ask you to withdraw that comment.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I withdraw.

I'll rephrase it: This document can't be trusted, just like this government.

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I withdraw.

No objective person would call it credible.

Ontario families have been through more than seven long years of broken promises, higher taxes, runaway spending and ballooning debt. This is a fact; it's beyond dispute. Instead of articulating a credible plan to address this government's failures in these areas, the finance minister went into attack mode, channelling his energies into an attack against the official opposition. His focus was on our party's leader, not on the minister's job, not on his responsibilities, not on the problems facing hard-working Ontario families, many of which are struggling to make ends meet.

In my 21 years in this Legislature I have never seen a performance like it. It was unprecedented in its presentation, irresponsible, even reprehensible in its tone and content. He actually implied that our party, if elected, would cut health care, lay off 33,000 teachers, reduce the number of doctors in Ontario by 12,000—

Interjection: It was a lie.

Mr. Ted Arnott: —all of which are lies. But in a budget of—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'll have to ask you to withdraw.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I withdraw—all of which are 100% false. But in a budget of so little substance, it's perhaps understandable that the finance minister thought he needed to fill time.

We know that this government will say anything, no matter how incredible, if it believes it will win votes. It's also clear that this government will spend without restraint, again, if it believes it will win votes. And with government spending that's out of control, the result will always be higher taxes, higher debt or both.

Unfortunately for this government, no one believes them anymore. People know that this government has fallen woefully out of touch with their everyday concerns and their hopes and aspirations to become economically secure amidst uncertain times. This budget will only cement their accurate perceptions about this government. That's because the budget simply reinforces the approach this government has taken for some time.

We're told that this government has ramped up program spending by an astounding 77% since they assumed office. Meanwhile, in the same period, we're told Ontario's economy grew by only 9%. As the leader of the official opposition has said, "You can't run your house that way, you can't run your business that way, and we can no longer continue to run the province of Ontario that way." He's absolutely right.

Also correct is the Waterloo Region Record in its editorial of March 30, which says that the Liberal budget "represents a colossal lost opportunity to tackle the most serious economic threat facing this province—its massive, surging and crippling debt." The editorial goes on to say, "During their eight years in office, the Liberals have been too willing to live with annual deficits that drove up Ontario's debt by 74%—from \$138.8 billion in 2003-04 to \$241.4 billion in the coming year. They have never lacked a vision to introduce new programs, simply a plan to pay for it all. That is a major oversight.

"What makes this trend more alarming is the government's willingness to continue piling on new debt to the mountain it has built. It plans to continue running annual deficits until 2017-18. By then, according to its own predictions, Ontario's debt will have risen to a \$307.5-billion Matterhorn casting its chilling shadow over the entire province.

"Debt may not be on the radar screens of most Ontarians. It should. In the coming year's budget, Ontario will spend \$10.2 billion merely to service its debt. After health and education, that stands as the province's third greatest expenditure. If interest rates rise, as they are expected to later this year, debt costs will become even more burdensome. And as more of your "tax dollar goes to fund debt and less for programs and services, taxpayers will increasingly feel cheated.

"Moreover, the Liberals are taking a risky gamble in allowing the debt to continue its upward spiral for the

next six years. By then, Ontario could be engulfed in yet another economic downturn—which could necessitate new stimulus spending and even higher debt."

This is a colossal failure on the part of this government. Our children will be spending their working years paying for the Liberals' legacy of debt, and they deserve better.

What does the finance minister have to say? How does he intend to come to grips with this shameful legacy of spiralling spending? He pledges to restrain spending growth to just 1%. What a preposterous claim. Who do they think they're kidding?

Again, I quote the Record: "It is the same government that increased program spending by 62% since taking power (from \$70.1 billion in 2003-04 to \$113.7 billion this year) and now suddenly thinks it can limit annual program spending increases to 1.0%. Considering that Ontario's aging population will demand more health care, not less, such budget dreams are hued in Technicolor."

Over and over, year after year, this government has rapidly ramped up the debt, and now they promise to limit their spending increases to just 1% a year? This number is indeed hued in Technicolor. It's a work of fiction, arguably even a fantasy, and, without a doubt, inevitably a failure. That is the history of this government.

Its history tells us something else: Massive spending increases lead to massive tax increases, massive increases in the debt, or both. They say they won't raise taxes, but nobody believes them anymore. We can only guess what new taxes the McGuinty Liberals will introduce after the next election. After explicitly promising not to raise taxes, they brought in the health tax—raising taxes not to benefit health care, but to benefit general revenue, this government's great big black hole of waste and mismanagement.

After explicitly promising not to raise taxes, they brought in the HST, raising taxes on essentials such as heat, hydro and gasoline. Let's not forget their eco tax fiasco. They've done it before, and we believe, if given the chance, they'll have no hesitation to do it again.

I believe that if re-elected next October, the McGuinty Liberals would raise the HST somewhere between two and five percentage points. It would go from 13% to between 15% and 18%.

Like taxes, hydro bills are a huge issue across Ontario. Government members are no doubt hearing from their constituents, as we are, about the high and still rising cost of hydro. I'm hearing it from across my riding: from Centre Wellington to Erin, from Puslinch and Guelph/Eramosa township and Halton Hills. People are fed up, not only because their hydro rates are going through the roof, but because they feel that the government is indifferent to the problem. Not surprisingly, the budget didn't even mention this issue.

In November, I told this House about a constituent and mother who, unsolicited, wrote to me to say she would have to choose between paying her hydro bill and going to the grocery store. Her message reads as follows:

"I'm a single mother and work very hard for everything I bring to the table. I ask for no handouts and am proud that I can raise my son on my own. I do have a very tight budget, and having electric heat puts a real strain on my son and I, especially in the winter months.... Question: Do I keep my son's tummy full or do I keep him warm, you tell me because HST is going to affect my hydro bill big this year. I'm really concerned about how much I have to subtract from my grocery bill in order to keep the house warm and my son from getting sick.... I don't know where to turn but I'm sure hoping you can help."

My time is limited because I want to share my time with my colleague. I'll have more to say about this when I have a chance to speak to the budget bill.

Thank you very much for listening to me this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Thornhill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: In the few minutes that I have left, I want to add a couple of comments on this budget motion. I think it's very important—looking across the way at the Liberals who are occupied, I don't know, signing Christmas cards or reading newspapers. I want to talk to the people who are watching on television, to tell them something. No matter what anybody says to you, the HST is going to rise by 2%, minimum. That's the plan over there. This government has taken great pains to tell you that they're not going to touch your taxes, but that's not the truth. The truth is—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I ask you to withdraw.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I withdraw the comment.

That is not accurate. The truth of the matter is that as time goes on, they will have to pay for what they're buying, the same as every one of us does. What we're looking at this year is approximately a \$17-billion deficit to add to what's already there, for a sum total of what Ontario owes approaching a quarter of a trillion dollars. None of us can even fathom what that means, what a stack of hundred- or thousand-dollar bills of that stature would look like. The fact of the matter is, you're paying for it, your kids are paying for it, and at those numbers, your grandkids are paying for it. That's what you can expect.

It has been said, but it needs to be said again: The Minister of Finance did not present a budget in this place last week; he presented a work of fiction. This is what he presented. If you hold it in your hand and look at it—and I'm not using a prop here; this is the budget—it's a book approximately the size of the Bible. It is their bible. It is their blueprint for the future. It is a blueprint for the tax increases that I've been talking about. If you fold it up, it looks a lot like a bottle of shampoo, doesn't it? It's about the same size. I like to call this the shampoo budget, because if you look at a bottle of shampoo, there is an instruction on it that says "lather, rinse, repeat," and that's an awful lot like "tax, spend, repeat." That is pre-

cisely what this government does, because it doesn't know how to do anything else.

1610

Let me talk for a minute about the basic difference in philosophy between how that party funds what it wants to do and how this party, after October 6, will fund what it wants to do. They like to portray us as neanderthals who don't want to take our social responsibility. They like to say that the deficits they've been ringing up to bring their vast social programs to you are about their responsibility and the fact that we would cut is about our lack of responsibility.

As a matter of fact, in the budget speech itself the finance minister spent quite a bit of time talking about what this party would cut. He enumerated for us: "If you cut 12,000 doctors, you can save \$3 billion; if you cut 37,000 nurses, you can save \$3 billion," and on and on. The fact of the matter is, nobody here has been talking about cuts. What we've been talking about is maintaining a great health care system and moving dollars to front-line health care and doing the same in education, while that party insists on saying that in order to do that, they have to run deficits.

What we believe in is what comes down to the basic difference in philosophies between liberalism and conservatism. The Liberals want to take money out of the economy from you by way of taxes—and like I said, not 13% HST; 15% HST—and they want to fund their programs, whereas we believe that you can take money and put it back into people's pockets through tax decreases, and contrary to what they want you to believe, that doesn't decrease what you have to spend. It increases it. Why does it increase it? Because if you have more money to spend, you spend that money. It goes into the economy. It creates economic activity. Economic activity transposes itself into jobs. Jobs are people, and people pay taxes, and when they pay taxes, you fund it. If you don't believe me, the much maligned Mike Harris, no matter whatever else you say he did, created one million net new private sector jobs in his time in office, and you people have created none.

You've created public sector jobs. That's what costs the money. That's why you're taxing people to death. That's why there's a deficit as big as all outdoors, and you sit there pompously and you support that. That's what people in Ontario now know, and that's what people in Ontario are going to vote against come October.

You may think that we're somewhat smug, that we think we know better because the polls favour our party. We don't pay any attention to the polls favouring our party. They'll go up and down a lot of times between now and October. But there's one piece of the polling that is absolutely consistent, no matter whether it's Nik Nanos doing the polling, Ipsos Reid doing the polling or COMPAS doing the polling, and it's on the question, "Do you feel that Ontario is in need of change?" No matter who does the polling, that number comes out at approximately 75%.

So get yourselves ready. It's not about what the polls say about parties right now; it's about the fact that Ontarians have finally gotten wise to you. They're wise enough to know that they're tapped out. They're wise enough to understand that provinces run like businesses, run like homes.

There's a pie. It's only so big. You can carve it up only so many ways. Most of us have no opportunity to create a second pie. We only get one, so we have to feed everybody with it. In your world, when you run out of pie, Dalton McGuinty and his finance minister can go out and bake another one, and if they run out of that, they can bake a third one. It doesn't work that way.

You've been hearing us talk about the fact that Dalton McGuinty sees Ontario's public as his own personal ATM, and that's because it's true. I, for one, am sick and tired of this back pocket with my wallet in it being the slot where he can put in his hand, grab it, and take what he needs from me. It's not a question of whether you're prepared to fund social programs or whether you're prepared to put more money into mental health. Anybody would applaud that. You would do it; we would do it. It's a question of how you control the efficiencies of it.

You also take great delight in talking about us. For the last four years, I've heard about how we're going to come in and we're going to cut \$3 billion out of health care. We have never, ever, ever said that we were going to cut \$3 billion out of health care. All we've ever said is that we would remove \$3 billion in health tax in an ancient platform. We are a great Progressive Conservative Party in waiting to form a great Progressive Conservative government that will not do anything to health care but improve it from the shambles that you people have made it. We believe in providing front-line services to Ontarians, the services that they have paid their hard-earned taxes to get. The same thing is true in education. That's what people expect. People don't expect to pay no taxes; we simply say that if we get enough people out there working, because everybody has a right to work in this province, there will be a pool of dollars that is sufficient to fund what Ontarians need, what Ontarians want and what Ontarians are prepared to pay for, and they won't have to feel that hand slipping into the back pocket to take care of them.

We believe, as the amendment to the budget motion has stated, that we cannot support a budget that will increase reckless spending and waste and will result in tax increases or new taxes to pay for it. That's what we've said in the amendment. That's the amendment we'll be voting for. I can promise you: Your budget, from our perspective, doesn't pass muster.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I've got to tell you, I'm a bit disappointed today, because the Conservatives and New Democrats have been together for quite some time attacking Liberals. We've been doing so well. Then the member, my good friend from Parry Sound-Muskoka, introduces an amendment, and it now focuses my atten-

tion and energy to attack what they brought forward, versus me attacking Liberals. Why would you do that? We had such a good thing going for such a long time, and then all of a sudden you just take me from there and you bring me here. Why would you do that? I'll be speaking in approximately eight or 10 minutes, and I'm going to have to spend 20 of my minutes attacking your former Premier, whom some of you served under and some of you—

Mr. Peter Shurman: Knock yourself out. Rosie, I'd love to listen to you speak.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And I used to love doing that—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Talk about Bob Rae while you're at it.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm going to give you that opportunity in your two-minute response.

I had 20 minutes to focus all of my good energy on the Liberals. You spoiled it. I wish you hadn't done that.

Stay tuned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions?

Mr. Pat Hoy: The last speaker didn't use his time to attack us. I believe what he says, that he is going to go after the official opposition, because he didn't use all his time there. He's saving up that energy for his next chance to speak.

As one of the very few farmers in this Legislature and one who is proud of that profession that I'm in, I want to spend a bit of time talking about the risk management plan, or what is commonly known in the farm community as RMP. We introduced the risk management plan four years ago for grains and oilseeds. It was a three-year pilot project designed, in the main, by the Grain Farmers of Ontario. They designed the program. We looked at it, put the financial aspects that would naturally have to be accountable and transparent to that plan, and initiated it some four years ago. Then we extended it for another year and have now made it permanent.

We are also looking at a self-directed risk management program for the edible horticultural sector, and we also want to help the cattle, hog, sheep and veal farmers of Ontario.

On both sides of the House, and particularly from the official opposition, they are trying to claim the credit for this plan when clearly it was the Ontario Liberal Party who brought it in four years ago in the first place.

1620

But the real thrust and cut to this is that the grain farmers of Ontario and the cattle and hog producers of Ontario have won the day with this plan. It's their plan. They brought it forward. They are the ones to be commended for having the thoughtfulness to design such a plan that provides for them. I just wish that the federal government would join with us in protecting our Ontario—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments and questions?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's a pleasure to rise and speak to this amendment. I will start off by saying that when I was listening to that thoughtful discussion and debate by the member from Halton, all I heard on the other side—the members from Guelph, Northumberland and Chatham—Kent—Essex were laughing and chuckling. It continues to show their utter contempt and disregard for this House and for the people of Ontario. It is the utter contempt that they're showing for the people of Ontario with this budget.

Interjections.

Mr. Randy Hillier: We hear them heckling and cackling over there. They get so upset and so righteously indignant when people speak the truth on this side of the House. That's what we can say. There's one thing that is liberal about this government: The one thing that's liberal about this government is their blatant use of falsehoods in this House—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I ask the member to withdraw that.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'll withdraw that.

Maybe there's one more thing: their liberal use of breaking promises. That's another part of this Liberal government.

We have put forth an amendment on this budget: that we cannot support a budget that will increase reckless spending, and that's what this budget is all about. We are going to see, the people of Ontario are going to see, another rise in their HST. We'll see another rise of 2% to 5% with this Liberal government. We've seen them as they've doubled the debt of this province in seven years; they have doubled the debt. They've given nothing to the people of Ontario other than to saddle them with another debt burden. They're going to hit them with another tax, just like they did with the eco tax, just like they did with the HST—we're going to see a rise in that—and their smart meter tax machines. This is a reckless, out-of-control government, and the—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments or questions?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'd like to take this opportunity to speak about the budget that has been presented in this House.

I wanted to comment on the speech that was done by the member of the official opposition. The budget that is being presented has been very well received in my community of Ottawa—Vanier.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: The Ottawa Citizen.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Even the Ottawa Citizen has supported the budget. The budget had a discussion of about 48 hours, and that's it. Everybody found something that they liked in the budget, and they were very pleased.

But one question that my constituents are asking me—every time they meet with me, they say, “What is the plan of the provincial Conservative Party?” We've heard them talking about reducing the HST by two points, so that means \$6 billion. Then, they said that they are going to cut the health tax, which is another \$3 billion. So it's \$9 billion. What are they going to do?

They all remember 28 hospitals that were closed down. They almost closed my Montfort Hospital in my riding. It's a good thing that people got their money together, hired a good lawyer, Ron Caza, and went before the court, and then the appeal court. They won at both levels. So they cannot close my hospital in my riding anymore. But all the other hospitals are on the chopping block if this party is elected.

We have one of the best health care systems in Canada and in the world. I wanted to commend also the good work that is being done by health professionals in my riding: by the nurses, the doctors and everyone who works in my hospital.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Thornhill has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Shurman: On behalf of myself and the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, as well as Parry Sound—Muskoka, thank you very much for the comments to the members from Trinity—Spadina, Chatham—Kent—Essex, Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, and the Minister of Community and Social Services, who managed to promulgate that interesting rumour again that, somehow or other, we on the Progressive Conservative side have in mind to lower the HST by 2%. I've never heard that rumour, not even in my caucus room.

Here's what isn't a rumour: The Liberal Party, under the guise of this budget, suggests that there are no tax increases coming when we know that the HST is going up, so that you're going to pay a total of 15%.

Interjection: Shame on you.

Mr. Peter Shurman: And shame on you for not coming clean and saying so.

The Progressive Conservative Party is focused on making a difference and meeting the needs and the interests of Ontario taxpayers, and if you don't believe me, take a look at the budget discussion that has taken place and the budget discussion that will take place over the course of the next week or 10 days. Take a look at the fact that months ago, our leader, Tim Hudak, talked about doing a review of the ABCs, the agencies, boards and commissions of the province of Ontario, and there the Liberals have—I won't say “borrowed”—stolen a page out of our book, and in their case, they have to hire a high-paid consultant. Don Drummond, a well-known economist, is going to come in and study that very same thing for them. And you know what happened the last time that was done. What happened then is, the HST came along. So it's a very easy jump to realize that the Premier, who has run this government for the past eight years, who said “no new taxes” and brought in a health premium that has never gone for health, who brought in the HST when there was going to be no tax increase, will raise your HST by 2%.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The Tories have introduced an amendment, and I'm going to speak largely to that. I have to admit that their last point about the budget failing

to halt the doubling of Ontario's debt is a fact. It is absolutely true, and that's something that we need to deal with and deal with quickly. If interest rates increase as we are anticipating and as they seem to be going up, every accountant in the Liberal Party there would know that it's going to destroy us. And the reason why debts are at \$220 billion versus who knows what is because the interest rates have been low. Think of the debt and the deficit when those interest rates skyrocket, as they might. I hope they don't, but I think they're going to start increasing sometime soon, and if that happens, we are in trouble. In that respect, the Tories make a good point.

But where I begin to get riled and begin to activate that memory that from time to time is numbed by experience and that I wish would go away is when they just bring me back to the language that Mike Harris used in the 1995 election, and it brings me back to red tape reduction. Man, oh, man, did I have to hear Mike Harris repeat those words day in and day out for eight and a half years. I was so sick of red tape stuff that it was just clogging the mind, like it was wrapping itself around my head and just sapping the energy and couldn't make me breathe.

I said to myself, "How long does it take to get rid of all that red tape?" Man, oh, man, eight and a half long years of red tape being cut and cut. I said, "How many more years does the Conservative Party need to cut red tape, if eight and a half long years is not enough?" We're going to give the Tories yet another four or eight more years to keep on cutting red tape? Surely we ran out of scissors. Surely you would think the tape would have been cut many, many, many years ago.

1630

Mr. Jim Wilson: There were thousands of regulations—thousands.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And my good friend Jim from Simcoe—Grey says there are thousands and thousands and thousands of kilometres or miles of red tape to cut. You would think that with the majority government they had, with their scissors all ready to cut, they would have done an effective job of cutting those miles and miles of red tape. It seems clear to me that they haven't been able to do a good job of it and that they need to get the young ones who have been elected—young and old—in the Tory caucus to keep on helping, because the ones who were there are just tired. They need a new team to just keep on cutting. Man, oh, man, oh, man.

Then they talk about an end to corporate welfare schemes. Jesus, you would think that the Tories had done their dutiful work in that regard, because by the end of their eight and a half long years, they cumulatively cut \$13.4 billion of corporate giveaways—and income tax giveaways, to be fair. If that's not good enough, why don't you consider the \$6 billion the Liberals have cut and will cut in two more years, which cumulatively amounts to \$6 billion—which is what I wanted to talk to, but I'm dragged into talking about the past instead of the present.

I'm going to try to leave some time for the present, but in the past the Tories cut \$13.4 billion of corporate tax giveaways. Imagine what we could have done if we kept all that money as government revenue. Because, you see, I happen to believe, as a good socialist, that corporations have a duty to give back. Their duty is to give some of the money they take from the working men and women and give it back to them—give it back to them in the form of a good health care system, in the form of a good education system, in the form of a good long-term-care system that some of us are going to need in a little while. I don't know how many of you Tories are independently wealthy, but I'm not.

Based on the money that Mike Harris took away from me, on the basis that I won't have much of a pension, I am profoundly worried about the long-term-care system, about the home care system that existed in the past, that you left us with, and that exists in the present, that the Liberals are leaving us with.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I know, but you introduced an amendment that I have to speak to. Why would you do that?

Mr. Norm Miller: Why aren't you going after Sarah Thomson?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But I have to speak to your amendment.

Mr. Norm Miller: What about the Liberals?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm going to go after them, too, but I need to give my fair share to you as well.

Mr. Peter Shurman: That's history. Talk about now.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But the point, member from Thornhill, about history is that it could come back and repeat itself. That's what I'm afraid of.

So Mike Harris left with \$850,000 out of his vested pension, and he leaves the rest of us, particularly the new ones from 1995, with RRSPs that the government gives, to the tune of \$4,000 or \$5,000, for a good long eight or 10 years. Now we get what, \$10,000, \$11,000, \$12,000 for RRSPs? That's our pension. I don't know, but I know many Tories are not happy about that, that RRSP versus a pension that I believe would be fair to us.

Red tape: They didn't do it in eight and a half years. And in terms of ending corporate welfare, good God, they gave away \$13 billion. If we had held onto that money, we would not be talking about a deficit or a debt, because it would have been long paid, particularly the deficit, and the debt would have been reduced by significant levels. If only we had held onto that money.

I get worried, because in Mike Harris's world of dealing with his financial problems, he sells the 407 for \$1.2 billion or \$1.3 billion and gives it away as corporate welfare for 100 long years. We would have soon had that highway back in our hands had it been left under the old rules, but the Tories, under the corporate welfare scheme, gave it away for \$1.2 billion or \$1.3 billion for 100 long, painful years.

I think to myself, what did the Tories do by way of their legacy? Hmm. These are fiscally minded Conserv-

atives who know how to handle budgets, who know how to mind your pockets, who know how to treat you well because your money is a big concern to them. And in the end what do they leave us with? Cinco, cinque, cinq billion dollars' worth of deficit—this in a good economy. How do good fiscal Conservatives in eight and a half long economic good years leave a \$5-billion deficit even after selling the 407 for \$1.2 billion?

Then they talk about red tape and ending corporate welfare. Please. Why do you bring me back into that discussion? You could have had me as an ally today, attacking Liberals alone. Now I have to attack Tories and Liberals.

The Liberals say, "If we elect a Conservative government, they're going to cut health." What else? Help me.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Education.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Education. Anything else?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Infrastructure.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Infrastructure. Anything else?

But that's enough. Presumably they're going to do that by—what again? Cutting taxes, correct?

Mr. Peter Shurman: No, we're going to cut your heart out.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My heart out? Member for Thornhill, be gentle: This heart is very sensitive.

Good Doctor, I hope they use you as a surgeon because I'm worried about it.

Mr. Mike Colle: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: That was a very offensive comment made in this House, and I think it should be withdrawn.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Don't you understand a joke when you hear one? Come on.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Lisa, not to worry; it's all okay. Lisa, we're good. Madam Speaker, we're good.

And so back to the Liberals. I often say, why wait for the Tories when the Liberals can do it for you now? Because the Liberals say, "Wisconsin: Look what happened. It's terrible, an assault on working men and women, and it's going to happen if you elect the Tories." And what do the Liberals do? In the same breath as they attack the Tories, they end the right to strike for the transit workers in Toronto.

But presumably that's okay because when Liberals do it, it's nice; they mean well. They're not brutal, really. And besides, they're only doing it because the city council asked them to, and Rob Ford asked them to. Again, as I say, when Liberals do it, it's benign. If Tories do it, it's malign. Wisconsin is only bad if Tories are there, but Wisconsin is not so bad if Liberals are there. Do you understand what I'm saying?

Minister of Citizenship, you know what I'm getting at, right?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: You're wrong.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: How could I be wrong when I'm stating something that I think is factual? And then—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: If I could proceed for a moment just to make another point which I think is very relevant.

You've got the Liberals saying how bad Tories are because of all the cuts they made and how bad their \$5-billion deficit was, even though you guys got rid of that deficit but now have \$20 billion, and they're slowly reducing it, and how bad those—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: They had no recession.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I beg your pardon?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: They had no recession.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No recession; they didn't have a recession.

By the way, you weren't here because you were a city councillor, but the hapless Bob Rae had a recession, but if you recall, your Premier, then MPP, used to make fun of Bob Rae for his spending problems. Now that you've had a recession, you say, "Oh, how hapless we are, because we had a recession." But poor Bob Rae didn't have one; he had a spending problem.

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Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: A small one.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, Madame. That recession was bigger than this one. It was—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd just ask the member to speak through the Chair.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I beg your pardon, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to look at you more often. You're so right. How could I have done that? You're so right. Thank you.

And so now you've got Liberals cutting corporate taxes to the tune of \$6 billion in two more years—six billion bucks. That's why I say, why wait for Tories when Liberals are doing it now? They are as fiscally conservative, with the exception of a few left-leaning Liberals who dare not speak out; with the exception of a few who privately say, "My God, why are we doing this?" but have no power—and I love that, by the way, Minister of Citizenship. I love that.

When I say these things, they say, "Oh, but you were in government with Bob Rae. What did you do?" as if to suggest there are so many strong ministers in that Liberal caucus that on a regular basis in their cabinet meetings are attacking the Premier for doing what he's doing. I dare say none of you say a word about your disagreement with the Premier.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: You don't know all of these people.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh, yes, I do. While there may be some silent differences, and while some of you may state some of your differences politely, at the end of the day—through you, Speaker—it's the Premier who has le pouvoir, that one single man.

By the way, he's not the only guy who's got the power. It's the staff, and the staff have more power sometimes than the Premier does, because the Premier doesn't have all the time to deal with all the problems. Staff are incredibly powerful. I don't see them back there, although there are some nice people back there. I

just thought I would make a comment in that regard because it's so amusing when some ministers say, "But you were there in 1990," meaning I should take some responsibility for what we did. I want to say, "Power, whether they're Tories, New Democrats or Liberals, resides in the Premier's office and his staff." Billy, you know that. We all know it. That's just the funny thing. We all know it but we dare not say it publicly. It's just the way it is.

Okay, back to the point: Liberals are doing you guys a big favour. They're cutting back on corporate taxes because they, like you, believe—including my friend from Eglinton—Lawrence, because he said it in the program we had together—that if we don't do this, corporations are going to go away, which is what you guys say. That's the Liberal line. I hope I'm being fair. The Liberal line is, "If we don't cut the capital tax and the tax on assets"—which is just capital tax reduction—"these people are going to go away." Sorry, they are already going away.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But we can't compete with China, where they're still paying, what, a couple of cents a day.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Then let's give up.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, but you know what? You're right. Let's reduce our salaries, right? Let's make sure people are underpaid. Let's get down to the salaries of China. Is that what you would like?

Mr. Bruce Crozier: No.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh, you wouldn't like that. Okay. But we need to compete with China, don't we? And how do we compete with China when their salaries are a couple of cents a day? Let's be fair: maybe a dollar or two a day.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Rosie, you tell us how.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Mon ami the accountant from—hold on, hold on.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Essex.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Essex, yes. There are probably a couple of names there, right? Essex. That's it—simple, yes.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I always want it to be accurate and fair.

We say that we would give corporations some money back, on the basis of whether or not they produce long-term jobs—not temporary, but permanent, long-term jobs. If they can show that they're creating long-term jobs, in my mind, those are the people I want to help. But if they're not creating any jobs—for which, by the way, to Liberals and Tories, there is no evidence that any of these giveaways create jobs—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Who's saying "aw"?

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Louie.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Louie from—Lou, where are you from?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Northumberland—Quinte West.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Northumberland? Come on. You disagree, right?

Let's help those corporations that are creating long-term jobs rather than part-time, which is what we're witnessing. It's a phenomenon that started a long time ago and continues today. Half of our college staff are part-time—half of them; 20% to 30% of our university staff: part-time. Many people are working part-time. As a result, they're working two or three jobs to have one full-time job. Why are they working part-time? They can't get full-time jobs. Why do they get part-time? Because these people, organizations or entities, whoever they are, don't have the money to give them permanent positions, because when you have a permanent salary, you are not just getting a better salary, but you get benefits out of it, and those benefits are costly. If you don't have the money, you hire them on a part-time basis because you squeeze more blood out of them than you would a full-time person. That's what we would do in terms of how we would help the corporations.

But to give away \$6 billion when you've got a \$17-billion deficit? You want to attack the Tories? Please, Liberals, a \$17-billion deficit, a \$220-billion debt: We've got a serious problemo. Don't give money away that you don't have. Hold on to it so that you can have a better education system, a better health care system, a better system that helps our seniors and a better system that has home care, so we can protect those people when their needs manifest themselves in the way that they do.

I'm not happy with this amendment. I was quite happy to attack you guys for 20 minutes, but it was a pleasure to attack the both of you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Mike Colle: I was going to say I come here not to attack Rosario, but to praise Rosario. I think—

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: He has a lean and hungry look.

Mr. Mike Colle: Et tu, Brute.

I think the member from Trinity-Spadina has really outlined the parameters of the difficulties that all governments face and that our government has faced in terms of the reality that we've gone through an incredible transformation in our economy. We've had the historical meltdown out of New York. We've had the shrinking of economies all over the world. I don't have to talk to you about what's happening in—the Celtic Tiger is basically a pussycat now. We've got Spain with 25% unemployment. We've got New York state that just increased its taxes and laid off thousands of public workers. He mentioned Wisconsin. This is the reality of the world right now, so our government has to make some very challenging decisions.

You're never going to please the right wing or the left wing, and you try to do something that's reasonable. Part of the program that we had is to ensure that companies, basically, whether they're big corporations or small, stay in Ontario, because the bottom line for these companies or corporations is that they employ people. Whether we like it or not—whether it's General Motors whom we had

to bail out or whether it's RIM, they need the support of a government that's very cognizant of their reality. That's the reality we face in this budget.

At the same time, we did not lay off massive numbers of teachers, doctors or nurses. We didn't close hospitals. Our schools are still fully funded. Our municipalities: The uploading of all those taxes and services the Tories downloaded, that's still continuing to take the burden off municipalities. That's still in the budget—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments and questions?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure for me to respond to the member for Trinity–Spadina. After he has his 20 minutes, my cheeks hurt because I'm smiling so much.

I can remember that we talked about his participation in the Bob Rae government. He did the same thing when he was a minister that he did today. He comes forward and he grabs people, puts them in the palm of his hand. He's very theatrical. You should have been an actor, because you just do a wonderful job.

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Mr. Bas Balkissoon: He is.

Mr. Steve Clark: He is. Oh. See what they're saying about you? They're taking liberties with you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: They pay better.

Mr. Steve Clark: The pay is better. There you go.

I appreciate the fact that you agree with us about the concern about the fact that this government is doubling the debt. However, I have to say that the member for Trinity–Spadina does have a bit of phobia regarding red tape and scissors. I think you need to have some therapy on that because you really had some issues. It brought you back and you talked all about 1995, and I think you really need to get some care on this. I really do, because I was worried about you partway through. You really have a thing with scissors and red tape.

I want to speak in favour, just in the short time, because on this side of the House we've certainly heard the concern of Ontarians: the things that weren't in the budget, the reason for this amendment. I really believe that people were looking for relief in the budget. They didn't find it, and I just think we have a missed opportunity if we don't pass this amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Pickering–Scarborough East.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm pleased to have a couple of minutes to respond to the 20 minutes from the member from Trinity–Spadina. Like the member from Leeds–Grenville, I very much enjoyed the 20 minutes, as I often do, but I also enjoy it because he's thoughtful. We may not always agree across the House on the positions being taken, but he puts forward a case and speaks to the matter at hand—the budget—and very serious concerns. I was particularly pleased that he took some time out of the 20 minutes to focus his attention on the official opposition and the Mike Harris years, and draw attention to the amendment that was put forward and look at it from the context of what I'll call a third party view, if I can do that.

There are a few in this House, as we reflect upon it, that we think of as deans of this place. I can't recall when the member from Trinity–Spadina first arrived. I know certainly it was 1990 or earlier. Whether it was prior to that, I'm not sure, but I know that it was at least at that point.

Interjection: Many years ago.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: A long time ago. But I would consider him now to be one of the deans of this place. We have a member on our side that we often speak of, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the member from St. Catharines. We often refer to him as one of the deans this place. Unfortunately, we're now one dean short, and that's the member from Mississippi Mills, the member Norm Sterling. It would be nice, during this budget debate, to have the other dean of this place on the opposite side, the same as the member from Trinity–Spadina, speak to this budget, speak from that context of history and experience and continue to offer that in this place, but he's going to be denied that opportunity on a go-forward basis. I'm saddened by the fact that we don't have that opportunity to hear from those with that incredible experience, the gift that comes with being a bit of an actor, that each of those brings to this place.

I'm looking forward to the—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: In the two minutes that I have, I'd like to speak about the speech we heard from Trinity–Spadina. As my honourable friend beside me here said, he should have been an actor. The NDP have many people like that. I remember Gilles Pouliot, who would probably beat you in acting, but I don't know where he has gone. Maybe he is acting now; I'm not sure.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: He's in Quebec.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: He may be in Quebec, yes. A lot of you over there never heard him, but he was quite a person too.

I want to talk about one of the things that the member from Trinity–Spadina said about industry leaving. I was here in 1990 to 1995 when the NDP were in government, and a lot of them did leave when your taxes were there. They went to Nova Scotia. They went to New Brunswick. They went out west. You've got to be careful—it's a fine line—and understand what some governments try to do to keep them here. But we did lose a lot back then also. It is tough dealing with China and places like that now. That's what we have to do.

I would like to talk a bit about our amendment. I think that would be hopefully voted on by everyone here and approved. I can't see why they wouldn't approve it, and I'm sure our friends in the NDP would agree with us on that. We never really heard whether the member from Trinity–Spadina agreed with our amendment or not, but I'm sure he would if he has looked at it. When he has his two-minute wrap-up, maybe he can tell us whether he approves that or not, but I would think he would, because it's very straightforward.

There was no relief in this budget. It was a terrible budget, as we all know and as all the people across Ontario know. Fortunately, we probably won't have to go through any of those bad budgets in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Trinity–Spadina has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thanks to all the friends in the Legislature.

By the way, member for Leeds–Grenville, I just couldn't afford to be an actor. It just doesn't pay. These guys work for nothing. The good ones get paid well, but you've got to be really good and you've got to get a permanent job. I don't know how many of us would make it in the field. I couldn't afford it. This pays much better. There's no pension, but it pays better.

To my friend from Eglinton–Lawrence, I've got to tell you, nobody speaks about Ireland anymore. Jim Flaherty, the Minister of Finance, used to talk about Ireland all the time and would have the green tie. He hides it now. He don't ever talk about Ireland no more. You know why? They went bust. They had the lowest tax jurisdiction in the world, and they said it was a great tiger then. Nobody talks about Ireland no more. They had reduced taxes to the lowest, and people went, because they said, "Yes, this is a great place to go. Wild West—let's go get that money." As soon as it went bust, they all left. That's the problem about being the lowest tax jurisdiction in Canada and the US: You're not going to make it any better; you're going to make it worse.

You went and bailed out banks and the auto industry. Now banks are making more money than ever before, the auto industry is making more money than ever before, and workers are earning less than ever before.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The people who are there have got jobs. Yes, it's true.

By the way, red tape—how long does it take? Give me a timeline, because you guys talk about timelines. When does the red tape end? I need to know that before I can support that amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'll be sharing my time with the member from Guelph.

We're looking at what governments are spending money on, and we have to consider what the opposition's federal cousins—they believe in building jails.

I want to go through a few things that I think relate to what happens in our society and show what our government is doing to give our kids, our youth, a much better opportunity.

We can start with full-day kindergarten, which is going to take our young people and give them that big opportunity. We're now at 600 schools, and 35,000 children are getting full-day kindergarten. In 2011, it will be 200 more schools and 50,000 kids. In 2014, full implementation: 247,000 children in this province will be getting full-day kindergarten, giving them that chance that many of them wouldn't have had otherwise.

Support for children and youth with special needs: The government also spends over \$186 million annually to support children and youth with autism spectrum disorders. Since 2003-04, the government has more than quadrupled support for children and youth with autism spectrum disorders and their families, and that funding is increasing again this year.

In addition to full-day kindergarten and class sizes—class size is down to 20 per class for the first three years—we've put a lot of dollars into a very important part. The government is also providing support to struggling high school students so they can get back on track to graduate. We invested over \$300 million in 2009-10 to help students graduate and move on to college, university, apprenticeship or the workplace. In the 2010-11 school year, the government is providing over \$275 million for student support and for additional secondary school teaching.

1700

Every school board has a student success leader who works directly with the principals to facilitate implementation of the student success initiative, which focuses on improving graduation. Student success teams, which include the principal, student success teachers, guidance counsellors, special education teachers and other educators, provide extra attention and support in every high school to students who need it.

What that investment has done—and it's one of the things we're very proud of in this government. The graduation rate has gone from 68% in 2003-04 up to 81% in 2009-10. That means more than 72,000 additional students have graduated since 2003-04—72,000; that's almost a small city of kids who now have a chance. They have gone on further and they're going to be able to contribute to the economy much better with that high school degree. When they get through high school, there will be 60,000 new spaces created as part of this budget. This is so important. When you're looking at success for kids, successful youth, I think this is very important. Even the Ontario child benefit, which is \$1,100 per child, which has been fast-tracked to that level this year, is very important; giving our children a better chance.

The money that has been put in for mental health is something important to me because in 2003-04 we started talking about the great need—I have many people come into my riding office—for additional funds, additional services for mental health, the support that families need etc. It was an all-party committee that has come out with the recommendations. It is our government that has written the budget and provided funds for that, having a personal connection with the mental health issue and how difficult it is for youth and how important it is that the treatment, the assistance, is given early.

I know that. I have three nieces, Sharon, Nora and Katie, and a nephew, Jesse, who would have to be very interested that the government has finally taken that action to put additional funds into mental health. It's never enough, but it's extremely important. When you have the cousins of the opposition putting those dollars

into jails, then it's going to cost us money in Ontario. There have been figures like \$700,000 a year—just our cost for the new laws. We have to wonder where the priorities are.

I would also like to talk about infrastructure, because infrastructure is extremely important, and deal with infrastructure that's been covered in this budget for my own hometown, which will help the commute from Ottawa–Orléans to the jobs in Ottawa, Kanata and Nepean.

“The Ministry of Transportation”—this is from the budget, page 128—“is working with municipalities to mitigate the impact on local traffic” in Ottawa.

Future work in the corridor includes winding from Nicholas Street to Regional Road 174, which will provide additional capacity and also support Ottawa's transit plan.

This government has provided, through Infrastructure Ontario, \$300 million for the new light rail transit in Ottawa, and then they came back and put in another \$300 million. So there's \$600 million towards an approximately \$2-billion project in Ottawa. But this announcement which was in the budget adds another \$160 million for the widening of the Queensway, which is made necessary because when the light rail transit is being constructed, the existing right of way will be closed down for two or three years, and the widening of the Queensway is needed. So there are 160 million additional dollars for Ottawa in this budget. I thought it was important to let the councillors know that we are spending a lot of money in the Ottawa area.

There's \$1.1 billion over four years, beginning in 2007, for different community programs under the aging at home strategy. These are extremely important dollars. There have been 58% more clients receiving home care since 2003.

That's why, even in these rough times, you can look at what we've gone through since 2009 and say, “Okay, that's irrelevant,” and that seems to be where the opposition comes from on this. But we've gone through the worst recession since the Great Depression and we lost a lot of jobs in that. Ontario, as a province, was the most susceptible to a loss of manufacturing jobs in all of Canada. But we have recovered 91% of those jobs, and that's extremely important.

In order to keep those jobs going, the stimulus funds were put out, and one of the things that's not acknowledged is that for every dollar the federal government—you see them taking credit for everything that's happening—puts into infrastructure in this period, Ontario put \$5 in.

This infrastructure investment continues. We're trying to recover from the 1990s, when very little investment was made in their infrastructure—and we know what happens with roads, sewers, water and hospitals. So for 2011-12, we're maintaining a high level: \$12 billion of investment in infrastructure. As we move along and as we come out of the recession, we're not just staying put; we're making big investments in research and develop-

ment, and the \$3.6 billion in 2009-10 is 50% more than was put into research investments in 2002-03.

I'm very supportive of this budget. It is the right direction to go. We're probably ahead of almost every other country in recovery. Ontario is the strongest province. We lead Canada with our wait times. In many ways, we're moving forward in the right direction and we're making those investments in our young people.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Guelph.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to join the debate on the budget motion this afternoon. I must say it's been a fascinating debate on whether we should increase taxes or cut taxes in a budget which in fact does neither; it maintains taxes at the level that they are currently at. In fact, it's quite a prudent, careful budget in that we are working to control spending and to get rid of the deficit at the same time that we're making a few new key strategic investments.

I must say, though, that I was offended by the remarks by the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, who is the member who has shown the ultimate contempt for the dean of his own caucus. He accused me of showing contempt because I was laughing during the remarks of the member from Wellington–Halton Hills, so I actually sent my staff out so I could explain why I was laughing.

The reason I was chuckling was because we had quite a passionate speech from the member about how reckless our spending was and how we needed to cut more spending out and get the deficit under control and what a reckless budget this was.

When the member spoke to the local media, he did in fact follow the party line. He started out by saying that he condemned the spending increases in the budget. But do you know what he said in the very next breath? He complained that we had failed to fund a new hospital project in Georgetown, a new hospital in Fergus and a great, big new highway bypass around Morriston at the south end of his riding. I do wish the members opposite could figure out what their story is. Are they going to cut or spend? I don't know. I can't figure it out.

1710

With respect to the amendment that has been put forward, it talks about not supporting a budget with reckless spending and waste, and I thought that I would like to talk about some of the presumed reckless spending which they cannot support.

I am a member of the rural caucus because so many of the agricultural stakeholders are based in Guelph: research based in Guelph, education based in Guelph. I was absolutely ecstatic to find that the risk management program was funded in this budget. I thought, rather than giving you my reaction, I would give you the reaction of Owen Roberts, who is a well-known agriculture columnist who writes in the Guelph Mercury but also writes in a number of other agricultural publications. I'm quoting Owen Roberts here:

"You might not consider the creation of an insurance program a historic day in your profession or trade.

"But consider the plight of an Ontario farmer.

"A single animal in western Canada gets tagged with having BSE, and the US border suddenly closes to beef exports. Including yours.

"Your harvests are plentiful, but when an agricultural trade war breaks out between two superpower exporting nations, prices tumble. Including yours.

"Mother Nature decides it's time for a late spring frost, or a summer deluge, or a harvest-time blizzard, and as a result crops fail. Including yours.

"You plead to governments for an insurance program. Ottawa comes up with one that doesn't work, so you and other farmers design one, and offer it up to the feds and the province. It hinges on contributions from both levels of government, as well as premiums from you"—the farmers. "Before long the province kicks in with a pilot program that runs quite well and becomes popular. But years go by (four years, in fact), and still there's no help from Ottawa.

"Then the federal government folds, for the fourth time in seven years.

"Who can do business in such an environment?

"Farmers say not them. They've repeatedly said it's unreasonable to expect them to feed the nation without an equitable, predictable and bankable insurance program. Farming is a big user of credit; just imagine trying to get a loan for anything big without decent insurance, or based on income that depended on the entire Canadian livestock sector staying healthy.

"Scant hours before last Tuesday's provincial budget, Ontario farm groups were issuing news releases clearly stating they had one priority, and one only—that is, for a permanent, provincially supported risk management program.

"They didn't ask for anything else. They just wanted an insurance program that they could take to the bank.

"And, it turns out, on what's being called a 'historic day' by a farmers' coalition known as Ontario Grains and Oilseeds, that's what they got.

"On budget day, they received from the provincial government a \$150-million permanent risk management program, an insurance plan they describe as a 'self-directed, cost-shared farmer-designed program that will help them through the market's ups and downs.'

"There's still no federal help, given that there's no federal government. But the pressure was on the province to come through, with spring planting around the corner and farmers feeling they'd waited long enough. The timing for this program was excellent, and the thanks from farmers [have] been profuse.

"Ontario grain farmers should celebrate (this) news,' said Don Kenny, chair of the Guelph-based Grain Farmers of Ontario, adding that the McGuinty government's leadership 'sets a new standard in the province and ensures the stability of our family farms.' Bette Jean Crews, chair of the Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition, said establishing the program

'was the single most important action the provincial government could have taken in the budget.'

"Curtis Royal, president of the Ontario Cattlemen's Association, called the announcement great news for Ontario farmers, rural communities and everyone involved in agriculture and agri-food. 'It will give our farmers the tools they need to sustain their operations so they can continue to provide high-quality, locally grown food to Ontario consumers,' he said.

"And Wilma Jeffray, chair of Ontario Pork"—also based in Guelph—"said the fact that the province took action during tough fiscal times and without the participation of the federal government 'makes this announcement that much more significant to Ontario farmers.'

"The only people who won't be celebrating this plan are federal Conservatives campaigning in rural Ontario. Why didn't Ottawa get behind a program that was so needed and desired by farmers in the province? Good question."

I've just got a few minutes left, and I'd like to briefly mention something else which is very close to my heart, which is the work that the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions did and that all three parties supported. I'm absolutely thrilled to see that in this year's budget we have a commitment to a 10-year mental health and addictions strategy, but also the beginning of that strategy with money attached, rising over the course of three years to \$93 million a year, with the initial focus of the strategy being on child and youth mental health.

I have to tell you that wherever the select committee went around this province, people told us that while there are a lot of cracks in a lot of parts of the mental health and addictions system, the consent was unanimous and the advice was unanimous: You need to start first with children's mental health and addictions. Again, I think this motion, which labels this as reckless spending and waste, is totally uncalled for.

In Guelph, given that we have both a university and a community college, I'm also very pleased that we are continuing to invest in additional spaces for post-secondary education. We know that we're coming into an age when 70% of new jobs will require post-secondary education. Our target is a 70% participation rate, and these 60,000 additional students will help to get it there.

I will not be voting for an amendment that says this is reckless spending. I will be voting for this budget, an excellent one.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to provide a couple of comments to the member for Guelph and the member for Ottawa—Orléans.

I guess, as part of my questions and comments, I would like them to address a question. The member for Guelph talked about the business risk management program. I have to tell you, I was extremely proud when the PC leader, Tim Hudak, at the International Plowing Match in St. Thomas, mentioned his commitment for the

business risk management program. I know many members on this side of the House have spoken in favour of that. I guess I'm surprised, when I read the budget bill and look at all the sections that were amended, that I don't see any legislative detail in the budget bill regarding the business risk management program. The legislative session is winding down, so I hope that the member will let us know the timeline on the legislation that they're going to be bringing forward after this.

As well, the member for Ottawa–Orléans and the member for Guelph talked about mental health. Again, the budget bill contains no legislative changes regarding mental health. I was a little surprised, because I know that the select committee for mental health talked about some pretty radical changes in the way that it's being delivered. Again, I'd love to hear an answer from the members opposite on whether they're bringing in a new bill, and the legislative timeline for that. I hope that they'll include that as well.

Recently in my riding, I just want to put on the record, there have been a lot of issues. I know that the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington and I share a health unit. There have been issues that have been released, both in the Ottawa Citizen over the weekend and in the Brockville Recorder and Times today, about the stress levels and the high rate of suicide in our ridings. I know that some recent surveys by the Child and Youth Health Network of Eastern Ontario have indicated that this is a big issue in my riding. So I hope that the two will address it in their questions and—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Trinity–Spadina.

1720

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Two minutes to the members from Guelph and Ottawa–Orléans.

We've got a big problemo on our hands: a \$220-billion debt. And we've got a \$17-billion deficit: muy grande. And it's a problem.

How are we dealing with that? How do Liberals deal with that? Let me just see. We're going to give away \$6 billion in corporate tax giveaways because we gotta. Somebody made them do it; \$6 billion in two more years. Someone made you do it. The other is a \$1.3-billion tax in income tax so as to benefit those of us who earn over 100,000 bucks—gone, permanently gone.

You understand what I'm saying? A \$220-billion debt, a \$17-billion deficit, and you guys are just giving money away. We're helping people because they need it; right?

Hon. John Milloy: Your leader stands every day and says we need help for ordinary citizens.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, so let's give our revenue away. Take it away from those of us who could afford to give it a little more and just give it back to them because we only have a \$17-billion deficit. CEO salaries, that's okay, they work hard. Some of these CEOs make three times more than Dalton McGuinty, the Premier. I don't understand it. Let's cap those salaries. Let's bring back those corporate tax giveaways. Let's bring some of that income tax back because that's a progressive way to

go, and let's go after those of us who earn over \$100,000 and put a little back into the system so we have better health care, a better educational system, a better home care system. Instead, we have none of it. We're just giving money away. God bless you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I'm pleased to join in the debate and comment on the words from the member from Ottawa–Orléans and the member from Guelph. I thank them for their comments on this government's commitment to the people of Ontario.

Specifically, they talked about the economy and jobs, helping our farmers and the risk management program, which, for the farmers in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga, is a huge commitment and they are very happy with this government's commitment to that.

They mentioned education and more than 60,000 post-secondary spaces and, of course, thanks to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, John Milloy, for that commitment from this government.

Also, the member from Guelph talked about education and full-day kindergarten. I wanted to take this opportunity to acknowledge the member from Guelph, Liz Sandals, who was parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education at the time that full-day kindergarten was being designed, constructed and implemented, for her work at the Ministry of Education on behalf of the children of Ontario. There are approximately 800 schools that will have full-day learning by September 2011. That's about 50,000 students. In the end, by 2014, 250,000 students in the province of Ontario will benefit from the work of the member from Guelph, who was PA to the Minister of Education. So congratulations to her for all of her hard work in that area.

In the area of health care, which the members talked about, more than 90,000 breast cancer screenings will now be available to women in Ontario. We sat here today in this debate and we heard the Tories call this budget a fantasy. One out of nine women in Canada will face breast cancer in their lifetime and this budget will help them, will be preventive and will make a difference in their lives, and that's real.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Thornhill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I listened with interest and I jotted a couple of notes from the speech by the member for Guelph. She said that the budget was a tempered document with no tax hikes and no tax reductions. On the face of it, that would be true. But if you take a look at that document for what it is, I would say to the member from Guelph that it sets the stage, and what I truly believe is, it sets the stage for a 2% hike in HST, at an absolute minimum.

There's one thing that we know about Liberals, and eight years of history proves it: They are wired to tax and spend.

You can't honestly tell this Legislature and, through this Legislature, the people of Ontario that with a \$17-

billion deficit, you are prudently working your way towards a balanced budget. If that's prudent, then we won't see a balanced budget in our lifetimes. It's not even remotely there.

You also can't single out individual positives. Goodness knows, screening for breast cancer is an individual positive and increasing money for mental health is an individual positive, but we're looking at an overall document that charts the course for an entire province.

What it does is it puts people at a disadvantage. People sit around the kitchen table, they talk as a family about their problems and they look at what they might be able to do about them. One of the things that they have to confront is a tax bill. Another thing they have to confront is being able to divide the money that's coming in as an overall household income and make ends meet. They're not making ends meet. They're looking at electricity bills that are sending them into the street—literally, not figuratively.

This budget is not a good budget. This budget is a very negative budget going forward in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 58(d), there having been eight hours of debate, I am now required to put the question.

On March 29, 2011, Mr. Duncan moved, seconded by Mr. McGuinty, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

On April 5, 2011, Mr. Miller, Parry Sound-Muskoka, moved that the motion moved by the Minister of Finance on March 29, 2011, "that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government," be amended by deleting the words following "that this House" and adding thereto the following: "cannot support a budget that will increase reckless spending and waste and will result in tax increases or new taxes to pay for it."

"Further, the budget fails:

"—to provide relief for Ontario families; and

"—to give small businesses a break by appointing a member of cabinet responsible for meeting measurable, hard targets on red tape reductions; and

"—to end corporate welfare schemes that pick winners and losers in the marketplace; and

"—to fix the broken arbitration system that ensures that public sector agreements reflect the ability of families to pay the bills; and

"—to scrap the wasteful LHIN bureaucracy and the bloated Ontario Power Authority and invest those tax dollars into front-line services; and

"—to halt the doubling of Ontario's debt."

The first question to be decided is the amendment to the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House that Mr. Miller's amendment to the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

I have received a deferral slip: "Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on government motion 51 be deferred."

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Orders of the day.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Ms. Smith has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow. I would just remind members that today's late shows are rescheduled for tomorrow at 6.

The House adjourned at 1729.

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Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
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Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
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Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

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Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
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McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	

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Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
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Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
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Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland-Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
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Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton-Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth-Wellington	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
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Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakubski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**Second Session, 39th Parliament**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**Deuxième session, 39^e législature**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)****Journal
des débats
(Hansard)****Wednesday 6 April 2011****Mercredi 6 avril 2011**Speaker
Honourable Steve PetersPrésident
L'honorable Steve PetersClerk
Deborah DellerGreffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 6 April 2011

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 6 avril 2011

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Islamic prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HEALTH PROTECTION
AND PROMOTION
AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION
ET LA PROMOTION DE LA SANTÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 5, 2011, on the motion for third reading of Bill 141, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act / Projet de loi 141, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was just yesterday morning when I was in full flight and I was interrupted by the clock, so I will try to rebuild the momentum that was going on at the time.

I would like to start by acknowledging what a pleasure it is to see Dr. King, our chief medical officer of health, in the assembly this morning to take in the proceedings. It is truly appreciated, and certainly shows your commitment to the improvement of public health throughout Ontario. I thank you for being here.

Yesterday, I had started to talk about some of the concerns I have with the bill. Bill 141, the Health Protection and Promotion Amendment Act, is focused on one initiative: It is focused on bringing central control of public health units. As I said, I can see why, in certain very narrow circumstances, this extra power of the chief medical officer of health could be needed. I have full confidence in Dr. King, in her judgment to use those new powers wisely. The issue is that this bill will be there way past when I won't be here anymore, and way past when any of us won't be here anymore, and only the words will remain—the words on a piece of paper that describe the bill. This is where the worries start.

The worries start because some of the words that we have used in this bill have not been defined, and some of them could be defined in broad terms. That brings me

worries because we have, right now in Ontario, a system of 36 public health units. Each of them serves a geographical area, and the entire province is covered. No matter where you live in Ontario, you're always within the district of one of the 36 health units. This being said, those health units have been there for a long time and have worked with their communities for a long time. They know them inside and out. Because of the work they have to do with the environment, they know all of the health care providers. They know each and every one that has a fridge and keeps vaccines. They know where they are. They know the ones that work well and the ones that have broken-down fridges. They know where all of the restaurants are, the ones that, here again, keep the food. They know their districts. They are there in their communities, day in and day out. They have a relationship with the people in their community, and this is part of their strength: their knowledge, their linkages to the community, because Ontario is very vast. Ontario is a land of opportunity and Ontario has a beautiful diversity.

If you look at the little communities that make up Nickel Belt and you compare this to where I work in Toronto, it's like we're on two different planets, but yet we are all Ontarians and we all belong. The strategies that my health unit has put forward to make sure that they stay in contact with the people in Nickel Belt are very different from the strategies that the Toronto health unit puts forward to make sure that they reach out to their diverse population. So I continue to have some worries about this.

What I had started doing yesterday is, I had started to quote from some of the deputants who had come in front of the committee and shared some of those worries. Yesterday, I had quoted from the Association of Local Public Health Agencies, and their quote was pretty clear. This bill had come without any consultation with them, and they thought that if we all put our heads together, all the resources in 36 health units and the office of our chief medical officer of health, we may come up with something better. But they never had an opportunity to put their heads together, because they were presented with a fait accompli. They were presented with a bill where the decision had already been made that the chief medical officer of health would be given those extra powers, and all that we asked their input on was on wordsmithing: Would they like to see changes after the fact?

This is not the way we traditionally work in the public health units. In the public health units, work is usually done from the ground up. That is, everybody is involved, whether the medical officers of health of the 36 health

units or their boards of health; they all put their shoulder to the wheels. They move things forward together, making sure that the diversity of all of the health units is taken into account.

But this was not done by this minister. This minister brought forward a bill that she said is based on the recommendations of what we've learned from H1N1. Unfortunately, she brought the bill forward before the report was released, and when the report was finally released we looked at all 60 pages of it and nowhere in the report did we see that, had we had central control by the chief medical officer of health, better public health outcomes would have come out of this. We don't see this at all.

I also quoted yesterday, before my time was up, the Toronto Public Health unit. The Toronto Public Health unit is huge. It covers a very dense urban area of our province, and they are in charge of public health for many, many Ontarians. And there again, they have shown in what they've presented that—and I will quote again: “Directive-making power would not have altered the problems with vaccine supply and distribution, would not have clarified the role and function of local health integration networks ... in the response, or alleviated the need for local modification to address specific community needs.” So, had we had this new bill, had Bill 141 been there before H1N1 hit the province of Ontario, it wouldn't have changed the outcome.

I would like now to quote from another agency, and this is the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. It goes as follows: “We also do not see the relationship between the proposed HPPA amendments of section 69 respecting the appointments of acting medical officers of health and the pandemic response. It was not an issue referenced in Dr. King's H1N1 pandemic report. The proposed amendment is again an example of the increasing provincial involvement in local board of health governance and administrative responsibilities.”

If you look at this from the association of municipalities, you have to understand that every health unit has members of their local municipality appointed to it, and their municipality has to foot some of the bill. They share in the expense of the health unit.

0910

I would ask a page for a glass of water, if any of them is not too busy.

The municipality has an interest in what goes on in the public health unit. Not only do they have a pecuniary interest, as in, they pay a part of what goes on, but they also have an influence. Because here again, the municipality works at the local level to try to improve public health. They are also closely connected to the people. In the brief that they presented, they really show that if the power now is not even going to be with the local health unit, where they share a geographical area, they share constituents because of where they live—now it's going to be the chief medical officer of health who directs what goes on. They look at this as, “Why are we there? If we're not going to have a say in it but we're still going to have to pay, how is this going to be beneficial to our municipality?” They have some issues with that.

The member from Whitby–Oshawa did make reference yesterday to a couple of changes that were made to Bill 141, but some of them remain. One of the big ones is the term “public health event.” It is a term that is used in Bill 141 but is not defined anywhere. A public health event would be something that would trigger and justify the chief medical officer of health exerting her power over health units and more or less issuing directives that tell the health units, “It doesn't matter how you want to do things; you're going to do things the way I tell you to,” which is what a directive is all about. Not only can she issue directives to the medical officer of health, but to the board of health and to one or many or all of the health units. This extra power is triggered by a public health event, but we have a bill that doesn't describe what a public health event is. This is worrisome to me, because a reasonable person could see a public health event in many different ways.

My health unit is organizing a smoking cessation seminar. To me, this is a public health event. It's an event of the health unit. They're also organizing all sorts of training for new moms and expectant pregnant women. This is also a public health event, but that certainly would not form the basis of triggering the chief medical officer of health to take over, to issue directives to my local health unit. So I would have liked this term to be described, and to be described in really, really narrow terms. Because when the good Dr. King is not there anymore and when all of us are not here anymore, those words in that bill will continue to be there, and we don't know how they're going to be used. Way back when they drafted the bill—the name escapes me right now—nobody thought that it would be used during the G20 to justify a perimeter while the world leaders were having their little chat here in Toronto. So we have to think in those terms. We have to think that those words are going to stay way, way longer than we will.

Stakeholders were very concerned with the generality of this term, and nothing was done to define it or to constrain when the chief medical officer of health has power to act in the event of a public health event. I don't know why we refuse to make the bill clearer. Why do we refuse to define a term that hasn't been defined and that can be interpreted in such broad terms by reasonable people?

The bill could have a significant impact, including a significant financial impact, on public health in municipalities. But here again, there is nothing in Bill 141 that acknowledges this or provides support for public health or municipalities. What that means is that the chief medical officer of health can issue a directive. That means that local public health units have to carry out whatever the chief medical officer of health decides is in the best interests of the public health of Ontarians. But in the action of carrying this out, they may incur significant costs. Those significant costs will be borne by the local health unit and by the municipality, which has to chip in their share, but they have no control over what they do.

What if it makes sense to do this in some health units, but in your health unit you look at your resources and

say, “Frankly, I would have done things differently”? But you don’t have an opportunity to do things differently, because a directive was issued by the chief medical officer of health, so you have no choice but to spend all that money with no guarantees that somebody will help you pay the bill. You’re on the hook to spend a whole bunch of money whether you agree with spending that money or not and, frankly, with whether or not it’s the best strategy to achieve quality public health in your geographical area. You’re on the hook for the money, and there’s nothing in the bill that will guarantee that you will ever recoup part or all of those expenditures.

This is worrisome to health units, but it is especially worrisome to municipalities. Municipalities are partners once removed, yet they are on the hook for the payment. It doesn’t make for a very good relationship. A more trusting relationship would be to have the municipalities at the table and make sure they have a say as to how we will respond to this public health emergency or pandemic or whatever else is going on. But this is not it. The directive could be issued and the municipality would have to pay their fair share, and there’s nothing in the bill that addresses this. It’s always worrisome.

From the start we know there are people who have everything to lose and nothing to gain. This win-lose situation is never the right one. The win-win situation is what we should be aiming for, and the win-win situation is to make sure we get all the partners in public health at the local level to have a say.

Toronto Public Health talked about issues with the protection of personal liability for boards of health and medical officers of health who are following a directive from the chief medical officer of health. Local authority may have to act on a chief medical officer of health directive, but they have no protection for their action. You have to understand that not everyone who works in public at the local level health is an employee of public health. In the example of Toronto Public Health, some of their employees who do the work of public health, and who would be directed by a directive from the chief medical officer of health, are actually employees of the city of Toronto.

So, while the chief medical officer of health, through a directive, will direct public health workers to do certain things, we haven’t really settled the issue of protection and personal liability. You are no longer doing what your employer has asked you to do; you’re now answering to what a third person once removed has directed you to do, and nobody has figured out what would happen to the personal liability of those workers who, in all truthfulness, are not following the directive of their employer anymore. This is something that needs to be looked into. This is something that needs to be addressed and needs to be settled.

0920

It is there in the bill that we can issue directives, but we leave this loose end out there. Thousands of workers who do public health work will now find themselves in this weird situation where they won’t be answering to

their employer anymore—they will be answering to the chief medical officer of health—and we have no idea if their personal liability would cover them if, God forbid, something happens. And we all know that something will happen, because something always happens. Life is like this. Life goes on. Life happens.

It makes me uncomfortable to put forward pieces of legislation where we have loose ends like this and the minister won’t even acknowledge, “We will deal with this,” even were to say, “We will address this in regulation. We will make sure we consult. We have a task force in place that is looking into this.” But to simply leave it out there with no follow-up—it’s just something we have uncovered, and we won’t do anything until a worker gets in trouble. That would be a little bit too late for me.

I would like this bill to be tighter, to have fewer loose ends and have fewer words that have not been defined and could be interpreted in different ways. The government did nothing to address this problem.

The problem is that this bill is moving on an issue—that is, the issue of centralized control—which, now that we have both the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care’s and Dr. King’s reports on H1N1, was certainly not a priority for either one of those reports. There are pressing issues. There are best practices that we have gotten from those reports. H1N1 was a big, big practice for public health units. I’m really proud to say that our public health units rose to the challenge and did a fantastic job. But they were also lucky that although the virus seemed to spread really easily, it was not as, I’d call it, virulent. It did not make people as sick as other viruses could.

So in a sense, we had a good opportunity to put our health units to the test at the max in a real-life situation, with a collective agreement that needed to be negotiated in Sudbury while all of this was going on. This was a real-life event, and we’ve learned an awful lot from it, for the good of everybody in Ontario. But nowhere in this learning does it say that having centralized power for the chief medical officer of health would have saved the day, would have made the long lineup go away, would have made the jumping of the queues better, would have made the private school that went ahead of everybody else better. None of this would have been changed by Bill 141.

The pressing issues were things like a lack of coordination between the local health integration networks, public health and primary care. That was a real issue. Who was responsible for what? Who was to do what, and when? The local health integration networks had not been there for that long. Their role in that particular instance was, let’s just say, not defined. Nobody knew exactly, and different local health integration networks responded in very different ways.

The same thing with primary care: Primary care had been the main delivery system for all the flu vaccines in the past. They were the one. Health units hold their clinics and everything, but the primary care sector had certainly played a huge role in delivering flu vaccine in the past, and for long periods of time during H1N1 they were held at bay. That was a pressing issue that needs to be

looked at and needs to be defined, so that we can move forward with best practices.

There are no easy answers when it comes to issues of local control versus provincial coordination. If it was clear-cut for everybody that, "Had we had provincial coordination of power, things would have been way better; here's how it would have changed everything; here's how everybody in Ontario would have been happy with the H1N1 rollout," then I would be the first one to say, "Please, let's go ahead and move." But nobody is saying this. We are saying that the balance between local control and provincial coordination is something that needs to be thought through carefully. It's something that needs to be defined carefully. It's something that will forever change the way public health units work in Ontario.

I would say that Ontario is really privileged to have developed, over the years, a system of health units that have worked together, that have coordinated their efforts and that have always worked in this way that everybody had a say, everybody came to some kind of agreement and then rolled them out in the way that made the most sense in the geographical area that they serve. We're changing this. The page is turned; we are changing this forever. But I'm not ready to say that we are changing this for the better. There could be areas where it would be for the better, but they're not defined in the bill. So it's worrisome.

In 2003, when Ontario was battling SARS and the SARS pandemic shook the confidence that Ontario had in its health care system—we learned from SARS. Things were supposed to change. Dozens of recommendations were issued to make things better. Yet seven years later—almost eight, actually—we are left asking many of the same questions: How could there have been such poor coordination? How come our health units fell short in some areas? And why was the communication plan such a disaster? Those are all questions that are valid. Those are all practices that we can improve on and that I know we will improve on; we have learned. The willingness to change is there. But out of all of this that happened during H1N1, the minister comes out with Bill 141, focused on one thing: taking away local control in favour of central coordination. This falls way short of my expectation and this falls way short of what we could do to improve our health units.

I must say that following H1N1, Ontarians' confidence in their public health system was shaken yet again. I will always remember the first weekend that the vaccine was available. The vaccination point was at the new Sudbury shopping mall. It was a horrifyingly bad-weather day in Sudbury. We had sleet and wind and snow and it was just awful out there. The roads were awful to get to the mall, and there was this long, long lineup outside the mall of pregnant women and families pushing strollers, waiting to get in to get their H1N1. I remember looking at this—it is tattooed in my brain—and thinking, "We are failing those people. Those pregnant women and those young families with strollers should not be out in that sleet and wind and snow," that we had that Saturday morning at

the new Sudbury shopping mall, yet they were. We failed them. We have to do better; everybody agrees. We did improve, and we will continue to improve. But all of those issues that we've learned—none of them are addressed in Bill 141. Bill 141 has one narrow mandate: Take away public accountability, public control, in favour of centralization. I think I have made my point.

0930

I come from northeastern Ontario. I spent 25 years of my life in health care in northeastern Ontario, and I have seen the results of decisions that are made in Toronto, that are Torontocentric and that do not respect the reality of what it is to deliver health care and to deliver public health in northeastern Ontario, where the distances are different, where the temperature is different and where the diversity is different. We've had many a good laugh at provincial initiatives that would come to Nickel Belt. We would look at this and say, "My God, those people must be on Mars. This has nothing to do with good-quality care," and we would all laugh.

We are setting up a system against the proven good-quality public health that we have, where we have this decentralized system in public health. We've had local controls for many, many years. We are now putting forward a bill that takes this away and that focuses on central control, and it is worrisome to me. It is not defined well enough in the bill and it leads to many loose ends.

Ça me fait plaisir de vous parler du projet de loi 141. Le projet de loi 141 est un projet de loi à portée assez limitée. Le projet de loi, en lui-même, sert à donner des pouvoirs supplémentaires à notre médecin hygiéniste pour pouvoir donner des directives à tous les services de santé publique de la province.

En Ontario, nous avons 36 services de santé publique qui couvrent toute la province. Peu importe où vous vous trouvez en Ontario, vous êtes toujours dans une des 36 régions géographiques des 36 services de santé publique. Les médecins hygiénistes qui sont en charge des services de santé publique sont là et ont une bonne relation avec la région géographique qu'ils desservent. Ils connaissent tous ceux qui offrent des services de soins primaires.

Si vous avez un frigidaire pour conserver des vaccins, vous pouvez être sûr que le service de santé publique vient vous visiter pour vérifier que votre frigidaire est en bon état et pour vérifier que vous conservez les vaccins. Ils ont une relation avec tous ceux qui offrent des soins primaires. Ils ont une relation avec pas mal tous ceux qui servent de la nourriture également, parce qu'ils vont vérifier que la nourriture est gardée dans les frigidaires à la bonne température, etc. Du côté de l'environnement, c'est la même chose.

Donc, on a cette richesse dans 36 services de santé publique en Ontario qui ont une relation directe et qui connaissent leur région en profondeur. Ils connaissent la diversité des régions qu'ils desservent. Ils connaissent la diversité des personnes qu'ils desservent. Ils connaissent leurs habitudes, ce qui fonctionne bien et ce qui ne fonctionne pas, et c'est une richesse qui a bien servi la province de l'Ontario pendant des années de temps.

Maintenant, on se base sur ce qui est arrivé avec la grippe H1N1 pour motiver des changements. Après la pandémie de H1N1, on a eu plusieurs rapports, des rapports qui nous ont démontré où on aurait pu mieux faire certaines choses. Aucun de ces rapports-là nous dit que les choses auraient été mieux ou qu'on aurait eu une meilleure qualité de soins si on avait eu la centralisation des pouvoirs par le médecin hygiéniste en chef. Il n'y a aucun rapport qui nous dit ça.

Par contre, on a un projet de loi qui, je dois dire, est sorti avant même que les rapports nous soient disponibles et qui nous dit que tout ce qu'on a appris de la pandémie de H1N1, c'est qu'on aurait besoin de concentrer les pouvoirs de notre médecin hygiéniste en chef pour qu'elle puisse donner des directives.

Maintenant, je dois dire que j'ai plein de confiance en la D^{re} King. C'est une femme de confiance qui a beaucoup d'expérience, qui s'y connaît en santé publique et qui veut améliorer la qualité des soins en santé publique. Je fais confiance à son jugement, et dans le court terme, je n'ai aucun doute que les choses vont bien aller.

Le problème, c'est qu'un projet de loi va être là beaucoup plus longtemps que moi et vous, monsieur le Président. Le projet de loi va être là quand chacun de nous ne sera plus là; quand la D^{re} King aura été remplacée par quelqu'un d'autre, le projet de loi va être encore là. Et là, tout ce que tu as, c'est des mots en noir sur blanc pour te dire quoi faire. Dans les mots en noir sur blanc, il y en a qui n'ont pas été définis; on les a laissés très larges.

«Un événement de santé publique» peut être n'importe quoi. Ça peut être mon service de santé publique qui nous offre une session sur comment arrêter de fumer. Ça, c'est un événement de santé publique; c'est un événement. Le service de santé publique nous invite—il invite les fumeurs, en tout cas—au service de santé publique. Ça, c'est un événement, mais pour moi, pourquoi est-ce qu'on ne prend pas le temps de définir dans notre projet de loi ce qui sera considéré un événement?

Même chose : il y a des travailleurs qui offrent des services de santé publique, mais qui ne travaillent pas pour le service de santé publique. Toronto est un exemple où il y a plusieurs travailleurs qui offrent des services de santé publique, mais qui travaillent pour la ville de Toronto. Ces travailleurs-là, qu'est-ce qui va arriver à leur assurance lorsqu'ils ne font plus le travail de leur employeur, mais commencent à faire du travail de notre médecin hygiéniste en chef? C'est dans la loi; c'est dans le projet de loi qu'ils devront faire ça, mais on ne définit pas comment on va s'assurer que ces travailleurs-là sont toujours couverts par leur police d'assurance.

Je vois que je n'ai plus grand temps.

Bill 141: In the short term, there's no danger to it. I have full confidence in the judgment of Dr. King and I know that she will listen to the public health units and do, in the long run, what is best for the people of Ontario. But I am worried when a bill goes out with terms that are not defined and with loose ends that have not been tied.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: It's a pleasure for me to speak to Bill 141 this morning. I just recall back to when the H1N1 epidemic was on; what I remember most was the inability to get the vaccine. The second thing was the long lineups of parents with their kids outside of a public building in the cold. So this is very pertinent to that.

I'd like to say that I read parts of the report of the Ontario chief medical officer of health. Dr. Arlene King is here today. Really, what we're doing is much in line with what came out of that report. I'm sure that there was a lot of study of the epidemic here and in other jurisdictions. What came out of it was that basically, the chief medical officer of health must have the authority to direct public health units in real time. I think that, without doubt, is extremely important.

We have an opportunity now to use the lessons we have just learned to build on the spirit of collaboration that currently exists; to make changes that are necessary so that we will continue to be ready, no matter how grave the threat. To think that the member who has just spoken sees 36 separate public health units as the way to go on something so serious, where best practices have to be looked at, have to be adopted, and the plans have to be integrated and have to be right.

When we give that authority to the chief medical officer of health, that is the right thing to do. Those plans that will no doubt be made, or are made now, based on our last experience, that the medical chief medical officer of health has the authority to look at those public buildings—it would have been nice to have that all set up so that these families weren't out in the cold for three or four hours waiting for the vaccine. That would be quite important.

All in all, I think this is a good bill. That's what we should be supporting.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I did listen, as I usually do, to the member from Nickel Belt, who put forward a very strong position. She probably has very good reasons, with her experience in the health care field.

0940

I'm very pleased to say that Dr. King is here this morning, which is important. In most bills that I've spoken on—I try to speak on every single bill—very seldom are the civil servants here. They're probably watching from their plush offices somewhere.

Respectfully, I think it's important, because this is important. This is about protecting public health.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: That's your office.

Mr. John O'Toole: My office is fairly plush too, but it's not mine, actually. I'm just a temporary resident there.

But I would say that when you look at H1N1—I believe that a couple of the very first people identified, when they arrived from, I believe, Mexico or wherever they were coming from, were actually from Port Perry, in

my riding. It was quite an interesting event. If I look back in the history—and I might even get a chance to speak on it this morning—it did cause some concern.

Then you get down to the whole argument of command and control. In many respects I think the report that Dr. King issued said very clearly that there's a certain time where there's almost a declaration of war, as she put it, where there would need to be a central Churchillian war room response to these pandemics. You can't have 500 decision-makers and make very prompt and efficient decisions. That's really the problem I have.

But you know, when I heard Dr. Low and those people who would be on television, I think it often—they urged the public to panic, almost. I'm not sure how effective—but the communication strategy itself needs to be coordinated as well to give proper information at the proper time and not raise the alarm before it's appropriate. Otherwise—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I am also very pleased to be able to speak to the comments that were made by the member for Nickel Belt. I want to first of all say thank you very much to Dr. Arlene King for being here. It gives me an opportunity to personally say thank you for the work that you have done on the health impacts of wind turbines. It has been very important for me to follow all of this along.

When I hear the member from Nickel Belt talk about the concerns she has around the centralization of all of this, I'm going to speak to this from a slightly different perspective, and that is from the perspective of the farmers. When I see things such as H1N1, which is also transferred to animals and to birds, we have a situation there where our commodity groups are working very hard to make sure that we isolate those situations, and the commodity groups are doing their part to make sure that we do that and make sure that it doesn't spread.

But we also need the ability, as farmers and those commodity groups, to have the opportunity to make contact with one central point. That is how we can manage to contain this, not only in our own particular farms, but in order to protect the public health. For a farmer to have to concern himself about where he's going to make that contact, who he's going to talk to—is that the local level? Does he talk to his commodity group first? And that is actually what we're told to do as farmers; we're told to contact our commodity group. Our commodity group will then ensure that everything is taken care of. The commodity organizations then need to be able to make contact with that one point, and I believe that we need to do that through the chief medical officer of health for the province—not the local one, but for the province—because it's something that can easily spread. Those are the situations where I see that centralization is critical to ensuring that we protect public health.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Nickel Belt, you have up to two minutes to respond.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank the member from Ottawa—Orléans. Certainly I agree with him that

the spirit of collaboration that exists in our public health system is something to be cherished and something that has served us well. I recognize that we have to be ready for a pandemic, and like what he remembered—I guess they had bad weather out his way, same as we had out our way, when the flu vaccination centres were open.

I don't want to lose sight that there are best practices that have been recommended. If you look at the medical officer of health's recommendations, she makes recommendations regarding the roles and responsibilities of different agencies, including the LHINs. She makes recommendations about the designation of flu assessment centres and the need for a real-time surveillance system. I don't want Bill 141 to be our only response to H1N1. We've learned way more than this.

I thank the member from Durham and the member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex. Certainly the farming analogy still works, because animals get sick just as much as humans do and public health could extend beyond humans into birds and farm animals.

I'm not against having clear lines of communication. This is also one of the recommendations that Dr. King does in her report: having a clear line of communication. Where you draw the line is this local-control-versus-directive. To me, those would only happen when they are at odds, and it should happen very, very rarely because locally, people should realize that it's better for them to—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: Briefly, because this is such an important topic and perhaps there are a few things that haven't been said—or at least said twice, because there has been more said than has actually been done. I just wanted to put a few things on the record. I did speak on this in second reading, so I'm not unfamiliar.

I want to give credit to, certainly, our critic Christine Elliott, the member from Whitby—Oshawa. She has been most thoughtful in her observations and her recommendations to caucus position on this. It's my understanding that we'd be supporting the bill. Nothing is perfect, I suppose. I guess there were some amendments that had been moved.

But I also look at it from a personal perspective. I would guess, as I said in my response to the member from Nickel Belt, that the first four people who were identified with H1N1 on April 28, 2009, originated in Durham region. In that respect, Durham region saw 92 hospitalized due to the seasonal flu in 2009-10, nearly three quarters of those attributed to H1N1. The number of infections was so large: A number of at least 292, these being only those cases that were confirmed in the laboratory. At least five of these people did not survive their illness. I guess that's a kind way of saying they died.

This illness did not affect the usual numbers. In fact, this strain was especially aggressive amongst younger-aged cohorts, and this is one of the surprises that I found. Normally, they always talk about vulnerable groups. This

is kind of what I said earlier, too, that often it's the frail elderly who are most affected and, most obviously, treated. Then it comes down to prioritizing those people who receive the vaccination, or whatever the treatment modality is.

This is why I kind of think that—I'm not second-guessing. I do support, sort of, the recommendation, and I want to quote this, because in the report, *How Ontario Fared*, by Dr. King, I think she makes quite a good argument. The way Christine Elliott has summarized it for us, she recommended that we need to "extend our chain of command to the local level," i.e., Durham or Halton or other parts of southwestern Ontario—all of Ontario. There are 36 different public health authorities. They're not aligned totally municipally, so there are some overlapping jurisdictions.

"The system as it is presently constructed does many things well in what I will refer to as 'peace time.'" That's the point I think the member from Nickel Belt is making, that autonomy in the local health authorities is a long-standing discussion: How well they're funded or not; how many of them actually have a doctor, a medical officer of health. Many of them don't. I don't know what the status is at the present time, but it's always a problem with getting doctors to fill those positions in remote or hard-to-service areas.

But it goes on here to say, "In 'war time'"—this is where I think of the war room in the Second World War in London—"however, when people are getting sick and people are getting scared, the health system needs to accommodate the kind of strong central oversight and management that currently doesn't exist. The chief medical officer of health must have the authority to direct public health units"—the word "direct" is very instructive—"in real time as he or she sees fit." Well, there will probably be a panel of people.

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If I look back prior to that: When we were government, at that time, I had the privilege of being parliamentary assistant in health for Tony Clement and, for some time Elizabeth Witmer, and saw just how complex the organization really is. It's amazing. It's half the budget, but it's a huge organization with lots of pressures.

I guess that's the whole point. I don't think any one person, as I saw it—I remember listening and watching CNN and all the various media outlets. It was absolutely—some of these news outlets actually feed on events, or tragedies really, and exacerbate the command and control model. That's what I'm saying. Now, when you've got all the social networking interactions alarming—and raising up, even, some of these young children who are singing a song and all of a sudden there are five million hits. This is a significant communications challenge; we'll just leave it at that.

I worked in systems for about 15 years, I guess, or 13 years, and I see this as being the large issue. It ties primarily into how well and how well informed—and the World Health Organization, I thought, was completely over the top, and I'm not qualified. When they came on

from the United Nations, they were just inflammatory. People who were getting sick were becoming sick because they were frightened, and they had what I call resonance. They felt sick.

When I talk, I don't want to be an alarmist here; I just feel that given today's—what's missing? This is not hypercritical, because I sat for a short length of time on the first version, under Premier Mike Harris: the Smart Systems for Health board. I was there. I'm a systems guy; I know. In fact, I was quite surprised how much of it was kind of modularized back then. I reported back to the minister—I think Tony Clement was the minister at the time—and I said, "Jeez, how are they going to glue this thing together?" Because there are really nine modules: there's long-term care; the OLIS, the Ontario lab information—there are several different modules that feed in, and who can see what information, when and where? It's a layered-access security, because when you log in with a health card, they shouldn't know that you've been on mental health medication or lifestyle medication. Who can see what, when? Can the anaesthesiologist see? They only need to know certain information for giving you a needle to put you to sleep. The general surgeon on orthopaedics might need to know your bone density, but who needs to see what? It's a very important, fundamental question to this whole issue. And who puts that information in? Who interprets it?

Why is eHealth not working? Nobody can read a doctor's handwriting. Honest to God, when they transcribe those patient records, good luck to you. "Will," "may," "shall," "must"—all these key operative words become very instructive to what the next procedural medical personnel would do.

Now, eHealth is still not working. In fact, here is the real issue on this: This is the question that Christine Elliott mentioned yesterday. It makes eminently important sense. Yes, we must be able to know who's been treated. They must be able to identify homogenous groups that should receive it. It could be a cultural kind of thing; it could be a whole bunch of things. You need to manage the data, for sure. If you've got all these health records, and you can almost tell where they live and all the rest of it, and these age groups, young, old, whatever, and people with native backgrounds or whatever it is that you might want to be treating, it's very important to manage it properly.

Giving it to everyone? Some people may have risks with it. They may find there are other things. So there is a management component to it.

I want to spend a bit of time on the whole eHealth thing, in a way. There's already one in operation. It's the children's health information. What the hell is going on here? Why aren't we using it? It's already in place. Dr. King, give me the nod. Well, it's true. It is in place.

There's also the whole—I forget, but there is a pan-Canadian system in place, too. Canada Health Infoway, I think it's called. If I happen to be on vacation and I'm in Nova Scotia, where my son-in-law's family is—and they're good friends of ours—and there's this alert, I want to be told that I'm one of those exposed. It should

be pan-Canadian. It's hideous. Developing a system that isn't pan-Canadian is completely unproductive. What about the visitors here? I find that the design has to be national. In fact, there is a federal—it's the Panorama system. I know nothing about this in technical detail but I know how systems work and I can tell you that this is a case to make where, if you want command and control, it's not just Ontario.

You've got the health quality council federally. They can't make it work on anything: on what drugs are available to who or to what age group. So it's not a system that glues together as easily as people think.

I commend Ontario for this report. I believe that, like anything, it's a first step. It's not going to solve all the problems; it's going to give some authority to do things. Responding to public health emergencies is important. I think we all agree with that. If you look at the history of this topic we're talking about—in my brief review here, it says that there have been three pandemics in the last century, with the most severe being in 1918-19—there weren't many systems around then; they had smoke signals, I think—the Spanish flu, where 20 million to 40 million deaths occurred worldwide. Many experts believe that a pandemic is certain to happen. The question is when, and it's not known when.

It becomes critical that all of these health experts—I think it must be very difficult now to be a doctor. I was at a lecture at the University of Toronto on nanotechnology and how they're going to treat things differently in the future using nanotechnology to get the medications to the actual organs or part of the body where it's really needed, as opposed to radiation, which goes through all the organs. If I look in the future, I think there will be new solutions that certainly weren't available then.

This article goes on that the World Health Organization and other international agencies, including Health Canada, "have recommended the development of pandemic plans to help reduce the impact of the next pandemic on the world's population."

If I can legitimize the argument of Ontario having control, I have no problem with that. I could also use the same arguments to legitimize having a pan-Canadian response and have no problem, because I've already suggested that I'd support that in certain conditions, which the civil servants can figure out. But I could also say, "I guess the United Nations are going to run the whole show." I don't think so. So where did that break down—or "those darned Americans. Or some pharmaceutical company trying to make millions of dollars out of this." So you've got into the whole idea of cultural trust and respect. When I've got the UN telling me something, I get very afraid. I'm not sure they know what's going on in Libya. They have an idea of what they want to go on.

When I think I'm off topic here, I say that the command and control—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): It would be nice to come back to it, yes.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, I am getting back eventually. I like to roam around this landscape because there are so many important and interesting things.

I'm going to agree that the final result here is to say that Ontario needs to have a plan. The biggest single thing is to have well-qualified people in those positions of decision-making, and it's a team; it's never one person. Nobody knows everything about anything. Einstein died, and it's unfortunate, but he didn't know everything about everything either.

I think we need to have panels of people, panels of experts, and we need a stronger communication strategy during these pandemics so that the public are engaged and informed. It's better, in this public safety thing, to give everybody a paintbrush. Then you say, "Doesn't that dilute the legitimacy of it? They're saying it's impossible." I don't think they know who is until it's all done—"Oh, gee, you know what happens? All kids five and under already had enough natural immunity to whatever, or didn't have any or whatever."

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Then there's the adjuvanted version of the vaccine. What is all that about? Too much information—it's a very difficult job; I'm not being critical. Thank God you're the doctor, is all I can say.

It is a fascinating topic from the point of view of purely management; managing the communication, managing and regulating the distribution and managing who knows what about what. Because these things are invasive, and there's no real response to it. They start to develop these vaccines or whatever in a lab that says, "I think we have the solution." I remember them talking; I think it was, "We're trying to develop the vaccine." You know, it's tough. I really don't know, but you have to have some confidence that there are organizations, like Dr. King's organization, that can manage these things in difficult times. That probably, to a civilized society, is very reassuring to be able to say, "I have a lot of respect for that function being well performed."

I would hope that these things do move forward in a fashion where there is a system tying the lab information, the testing information and the actual science together. This is sorely needed, absolutely critically needed. In fact, when you start to model health outcomes without systems, it's just somebody's guess, really, and there's random data that is used to do these forecasts. I would think we'd have to talk to Dr. Cavoukian, the privacy commissioner, to find out if she has any aversions to who knows what about who. Because that becomes the bottom line: the privacy issue and the personal right to be informed—and how they're informed. Is it informed consent? Is it implied consent? What kind of consent is it? Because you live here you're going to get it?

I don't like medication myself. I don't take any of this stuff. I don't take any of it because I feel my own immunity system has allowed me to arrive at 68 and still function reasonably effectively. Some people have no immune system and they need it; they need all this stuff every day. In fact, they have no immunity systems because they've all been sort of overcome by having replacements injected into their body. Those are my own opinions, and those are totally off topic.

I guess my point being is, when it did affect Durham, it affected me because I have the responsibility and the privilege to represent the area, and I hope to do it effectively for another five or 10 years at least. I would only say that—I was reading some of the stuff that was prepared here. This whole chain of events—when I look at the people involved, they were some of the most respected health people who were doing the very best they could do under an emerging emergency situation.

It's almost like looking at what is going on in Japan. Japan has probably some of the most focused, productive people—it's sort of a generalization here—but they haven't got the foggiest idea of what is going on in those poor nuclear reactors. They have some idea, and they say they're going to put sawdust in there to make the—I mean, even the brightest and the best have difficulty.

But when I think of Dr. Margaret Chan, who is the World Health Organization director and—in my own region, when I was a regional councillor in Durham, Dr. Robert Kyle was a very, very pleasant man to work with. He always had people's interests first. He was very professional without being overarching, opinionated. He always brought very well-informed reports to council and let council make those decisions—and, of course, Dr. Arlene King as well. I believe these people need the tools, and it's up to the government, and in our case now, Premier McGuinty's government.

I hope this bill doesn't get lost in the election, you know, because we need its third reading. We need it to get in. I guess there is a whole regulatory framework to it here. That is how bills are constructed nowadays; there is a kind of a framework, and then they hang onto it a bunch of modules called regulatory opportunities to bring it into effect. There's not too much that I found in this very small bill that was glaring in any way. I would only say that in the preamble section I guess is the point that would have to be reasoned out with the member from Nickel Belt. I think her point was very good about when and where and why these pandemic or overarching command-and-control procedures would be put in place.

The other part is, what happened to the \$1 billion in eHealth? I want the eHealth system delivered. I want a date it's going to be delivered, and let's get it operational. Let's say right now that OLIS, the lab system, works already; the pharmacists already use it in their own system. So in that case, let's get going with eHealth. What's causing all the trouble? In fact, they're paying Sarah Kramer, I see in the disclosure, \$100,000. She's still getting paid. What's that all about?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Sorry, I wasn't sure if it was my turn or not.

The member for Durham makes for interesting listening, to say the least. Sometimes we are not sure exactly if we're still on Bill 141, but nevertheless it is interesting. One piece of what he's talking about—the need for electronic health records—is certainly something that the critic had talked about and something that is addressed in

the report from the lessons we've learned in the pandemic: The fact that we had no opportunity to share in real time what was happening on the ground was truly, truly worrisome. It would have made things a whole lot easier had we known how many vaccines had been rolled out, to whom and where, and to be able to report back on that. I think that would have gone a long way to alleviating fears that the distribution system was inequitable. Because when you don't have the right information, then anybody's best guess is just as good as the next one. The need for an electronic health record that allows the right providers to have the right set of information to be able to do their jobs is something that we should all work for. It is mentioned in the report that came after H1N1, but it is certainly nowhere near Bill 141. Bill 141 has this narrow focus on local control versus central coordination, and it doesn't address some of the serious issues that we've learned with H1N1.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I listened to the member from Durham for quite some time. He spoke about many different things, and I get the sense he's supporting this bill. Even though he travelled to many different topics, he came back and went off and back. Anyway, I think the most important thing is, from what I sense, he is going to support the bill and his party can support the bill. This is a great, important bill for all of us across the province of Ontario to coordinate all the medical health units across the province if a pandemic or a natural disaster or a provincial or national or international issue happened in the province. It would be very important to have all the medical units respond in the same way, with the same method.

The third party—I listened to the member from Nickel Belt talking about many different things, and I think she is not supporting the bill, for different reasons. One of the reasons is, she thinks the chief medical officer of health would have all the power and would ignore regional and local input. But I don't think so. This would give flexibility to the chief medical officer to choose and alter, and to accommodate all the people across Ontario, to make sure the medical health units perform in the best way in order to protect our population in Ontario.

I think it's a great bill, and I hope the third party will change their minds, because in the end it's the aim of the bill to coordinate all the efforts, to create a way to look after the people of the province of Ontario in a professional manner in order to protect them and to be able to respond quickly, fast, in the right time. It's important. In the past, we witnessed so many different chaotic situations: Every unit, every place responded differently. So that's why the aim for Bill 141 is to coordinate those efforts.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

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Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to offer a couple of comments in the time available on the remarks

made by my colleague from Durham. I think there are a couple of things that we need to focus on in the remarks he made.

Obviously, a pandemic is something that is very serious, generally life-threatening and highly contagious. If you put it in that kind of a context, then a response has to be unified, coordinated and timely. It seems to me that that's the essence of the bill that we're discussing here.

The issues that we're concerned about are, of course, the question of the leadership between the province as a whole and individual areas across the province. It seems to me that everyone agrees that there has to be one person at the top, one person who has to have that ability to provide overall direction.

Many members have identified certain circumstances where their experience differs from that which has been centrally envisioned. I think the important thing here is to see that central voice as one that is interested in outcomes and responsible for providing appropriate resources, not micromanaging.

Finally, I'd like to draw attention to a point I don't think has been emphasized enough, and that is the important role of the media. When I think back to the H1N1 pandemic, I think the media was caught between the sense of urgency that they had and making it into a media circus. I think they created a lot of angst within the community at large by constantly showing long lineups and focusing on that. People who weren't even in the areas of prime concern were busily lining up because there had been so much pressure put on them. I think we have to—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I appreciate this opportunity to respond to the member from Durham on the small amount of time that was referenced to Bill 141.

But I'd just like to correct the record on eHealth: There are five million Ontarians with electronic health records now. All hospital imaging now is electronic: MRIs, X-rays, etc. It can be shared with and diagnosed by physicians no matter where they are in Ontario, so we can get the best treatment for people. That is coming along very well. It started in 2002, and I think that 2015 was always the original date for completion. It's on track; it's going to help, and will certainly help with pandemics.

I'd like to address issues that are more relevant to what has been said by the third party. We're broadening section 95.1 of the HPPA, the Health Protection and Promotion Act, to cover municipally employed public health workers; so the issues raised there are looked after.

The whole issue of centralized command: That kind of terminology is not proper terminology here. The public space aspect still bothers me. Right beside the lineup of people outside waiting to get into 255 Centrum, which was the old town hall in Cumberland, was a public building, yet it wasn't being used. Those plans are all going to be made now. Those mistakes aren't going to be made, and the authority is at the right place to make sure that we're prepared for the next pandemic that's going to come, that we're ready and that we have a good plan.

Having the chief medical officer of health looking after that: I feel very confident in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Durham, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to thank the member from London—Fanshawe; the member from Nickel Belt, who has participated in this very thoroughly; the member from York—Simcoe—I believe the idea of context and media are very important observations; and the member from Ottawa—Orléans: Thank you for bringing us up to date on the status of eHealth; it's important.

I'm kind of disappointed that Dr. Helena Jaczek, who's here this morning, wasn't able to respond to this, because she was a medical officer of health and, I think, probably should still be a medical officer of health. She'd have a more demanding role in life.

I also want to thank Dr. Robert Kyle. This is the report that I got most of my information from, so I want to give him full credit as a footnote here.

I believe that moving forward on this bill would be the appropriate thing. As I said, even in my review of remarks, I want to make sure that I make it clear that Dr. King did say she suggests that the province make full use of Panorama, a program developed to track and manage immunization jurisdictions across Canada. That commitment there shows that she has a sense of duty to the national response to pandemics.

I think that really, Bill 141 should have that put in there: to try and develop a national plan. Not just Panorama, but the whole eHealth system should be. I should know that if I happen to move, that I'm possibly allergic to something or whatever else that system—because I'll tell you; that is the future. Can you imagine modelling human health by age and subsets of all that? There are some real, valuable efficiencies in health care that aren't being made use of. I've never understood why, but again, this bill may help that develop.

I think the debate is over now, and I will have a coffee in another minute or two.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you to all. Pursuant to standing order 8, this House will recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'd like to welcome John Winston from Tourism London, who's here in the west gallery. Welcome, sir.

Mr. Peter Shurman: In the west members' gallery, I'd like to introduce two constituents: Mr. Hanif Ebrahim and Mrs. Samina Ebrahim, who are the parents of our page Fatemah Ebrahim.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I've got quite a few guests here today, so bear with me.

With us here today is Nancy Kirby, who is the president of the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association. Welcome, Nancy.

Gord Butler, the chair of the Ottawa Catholic School Board, is with the Catholic schools' delegation today.

Also I've got quite a few student leaders who are visiting Queen's Park for some meetings. For the Canadian Federation of Students, we have Sandy Hudson and Nora Loreto; for the Ontario undergraduate students' association, we have Meaghan Coker, Alexi White and Sam Andrey; and for the College Student Alliance, we have Heather Brekelmans, Tamara Popovic and Jim Robeson. Welcome, all, to Queen's Park.

Hon. Michael Chan: Today is Tourism Industry Association of Ontario Tourism Day at Queen's Park, and I want to welcome the members and also my ministry's partners: Beth Potter, Emily Harper-Hawkins, Tim West, Gary Masters, Phil Casey, Troy Young, Don Braden, Bruce Gravel, John Winston, Gerry Ginsberg, Tony Elenis, Grace Sammut and William Swan. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I'd like to introduce my niece Kristianna Martiniuk-Kingdom and her children Morgan, Bradley, Avery and Blair.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further introductions?

I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome to the Speaker's gallery today my brother Joe Peters and my nephew Nicholas Peters.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, in October 2009—

Interjection: There's Norm.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, in October 2009, a committee of the Legislature grilled then-Deputy Minister of Health Ron Sapsford over his role in the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle. According to media reports, on November 13, 2009, just a few weeks later, Sapsford suddenly quit as your deputy minister. Yet, Minister, strangely, the sunshine list of bureaucrats paid over six figures shows that you handed Sapsford three quarters of a million dollars in 2010, despite the fact that they say he quit in 2009. A simple question, Minister: Did Mr. Sapsford actually leave employment with the government of Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I understand that the Leader of the Opposition is concerned. I have to tell you that I am concerned, too. I think that all of us want every penny possible going to improve front-line health care. That is what I think the people of Ontario expect of us.

The question is, how are we improving health care? I do want to take a moment and talk about some of the

successes related to eHealth. I'm going to give you one example of a telemedicine success story. The diagnostic imaging department at Weeneebayko General Hospital, in Moose Factory, is a great example how eHealth's success is leading to better patient care. This department is connected with the Timmins and District Hospital—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, with all due respect, that wasn't even close to addressing a legitimate question from the Ontario PCs and the people of Ontario. We appreciate the minister's concern, but families want to see answers, and they want to see action. I asked you a very simple question: Did Mr. Sapsford actually quit government, or did he continue to be employed by the province in 2010?

Six days have passed since the sunshine list came out. For six days, you continued to dodge, to duck, to weave—straight answers to straight questions. We find out in 2010 that Mr. Sapsford's salary went from \$500,000 in 2009 to \$762,000 after he allegedly quit.

Minister, why did the McGuinty government give Ron Sapsford a raise in 2010 after he quit?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I think the people of Ontario want to know is, is health care getting better? Are we getting value for money?

I can tell you that the women along the James Bay coast would say, yes, they are, because the department at Weeneebayko is connected with Timmins general hospital via a dedicated T1 line. It gives people in the region access to imaging specialists in Timmins 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in many cases preventing the need for them to be transported. Weeneebayko was the first hospital in North America to use this connectivity directly as a result of investments in eHealth, the first hospital to use it for a telemammography program, where mammograms done in one hospital can be read in another.

This is just one of many examples—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, with all due respect, Minister, Ontario families simply want to know why they continue to pay for the eHealth boondoggle now, two years later. You gave Mr. Sapsford a raise in 2010. You refused to answer any basic questions about when he actually left government and why he was continued to be paid in 2010.

If anything, Minister, you've led the media and members to believe it was a severance payment. But yesterday, a Ministry of Finance spokesperson confirmed that severance payments are not reported on the sunshine list. This clearly is not severance; it's something else altogether.

I'll ask the minister again: What exactly was the three quarters of a million dollars that you handed Sapsford for? Secondly, did he actually get severance on top of all that?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite knows that I have answered the questions to the extent that I am permitted to do so under legislation.

But since the member opposite seems interested in knowing how eHealth is going, I'm more than happy to

share another success story. Digital diagnostics: Every hospital in this province has now gone filmless. That means they're using digital diagnostic scans; whether it is a CT, an ultrasound, an MRI or a mammogram, it's all digital.

Then under the diagnostic imaging/picture archiving and communications system, DI/PACS, a program led by eHealth Ontario, diagnostic imaging is connected to all other hospitals. What that means is that diagnostic imaging can happen in one hospital, in Owen Sound, for—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Minister of Health: Minister, you're not even making an attempt to answer these straightforward questions on behalf of families. It's actually breathtaking, the level at which you're trying to avoid simple, straightforward questions.

Let me try a different tack. It's not only the mysterious salary and raise that you gave to the deputy minister implicated in the eHealth scandal, but it goes beyond that.

1040

Let me tell you about Angela Tibando. Angela was a consultant at the Liberal-friendly Courtyard Group. After a scathing auditor's report and grilling here in the Legislature because of Courtyard's friendly relationship with the Ontario Liberal Party and the sweetheart deals, the Liberal-friendly Courtyard Group was forced to close its door, but Tibando found new life as a bureaucrat at none other than eHealth Ontario, making \$134,000 a year—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It is becoming increasingly apparent to me, through this line of questioning and other comments, that the party opposite opposes initiatives when it comes to eHealth. I think this is a big step backwards, and I'm—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd remind honourable members that your leader just asked a question. It is important for him to be able to listen to the Minister of Health, and you're not helping with your interjections.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Make no mistake about it; if we want to have a universal health care system that is here not just for us and our generation but for our children and our children's children, we must embrace electronic health records. That is why we are determined to keep moving forward, despite the ongoing opposition of the party opposite.

When we took office, only a handful of physicians had electronic medical records. Now, five million Ontarians are seen by doctors—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Ontario families are rightly concerned about the incestuous relationship between the

eHealth figures and the McGuinty government. You've made some sort of secret backroom deal with the Deputy Minister of Health implicated in the eHealth boondoggle, Mr. Sapsford. You refuse to answer questions about that.

We find out that Angela Tibando, a former Courtyard consultant, has now found a happy home at eHealth, the very place where Courtyard received millions and millions of dollars in sweetheart deals, and it goes beyond that. Another member of the Liberal-friendly Courtyard Group by the name of Ian Fish, a former Courtyard consultant, is now another eHealth bureaucrat, making more than \$100,000 a year.

What's with this incestuous relationship between Liberal-friendly Courtyard Group and the McGuinty government?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What's important to me, and what I think is important to the people of Ontario, is that we're getting results when it comes to eHealth, and we are getting those results.

Let me share yet another eHealth success story. I was very pleased to be at St. Joseph's hospital in Toronto just recently to celebrate the 100th and final hospital to connect with the emergency neuro trauma—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew will please come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The ENITS program is designed for people with neurological trauma, so an accident, perhaps a stroke. Thanks to the good work of the people at eHealth Ontario, we now have every acute care hospital in this province hooked up, so that 24 hours a day, seven days a week, there is a neurosurgeon who can read that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: You're getting results all right. It's too bad it's for the wrong people.

What we're seeing here are consultants from the disgraced Courtyard Group, which had to close its doors, now getting a very soft landing on the public payroll. We think that's wrong, and it doesn't end there.

Karli Farrow, your former health policy adviser and architect of the Liberal health care platform, did a turn as a Courtyard consultant. While at Courtyard, Ms. Farrow was billing over \$10,000 for less than a week of work as part of the eHealth boondoggle. But once again after Courtyard closed its doors in disgrace, Karli Farrow was handed a lifeline. She's now a health bureaucrat at Trillium Health Centre, making over \$150,000 a year.

Why is it that the only Ontario family you care about—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Quite to the contrary: On our side we are determined to continue to improve health care. Unlike the party opposite, we are committed to spending more when it comes to health care year over year. Their approach is to turn the clock back, to go back

to the days before the computer. We are determined to keep using technology to provide better health care.

Let me share a quote from Dr. Ron Charach: "Let's hope the endless buzzing around the cost of the ambitious eHealth initiative doesn't end up sidelining the project. There are far greater costs to the public of not having centralized medical data, in terms of tests being frequently re-ordered, and specialists asking questions for which patients have no answers."

We are determined to continue to make progress when it comes to eHealth.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. For two days, this Premier has stonewalled on the compensation pay to Ron Sapsford. I'm hoping today is the day that we get some clarity on this issue.

Mr. Sapsford quit his Ministry of Health position in late 2009. Will the Premier finally explain to Ontarians why Mr. Sapsford still received \$762,000 in wages and benefits in 2010?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite does know that I answered the question yesterday to the extent that I am able to under FIPPA. We had that conversation yesterday. Section 42 of FIPPA limits what I can say about personnel issues.

But let me tell you, we are absolutely committed to getting better value for health care dollars to improve health care for the people of Ontario. Our record speaks for itself—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just say to the members of Her Majesty's loyal opposition that during the rotation of questions, you have two opportunities to ask questions and the third party has an opportunity to ask questions. I would appreciate it if you would give some consideration to the leader of the third party as she asks her questions and requires to be able to listen to the answers to those questions, and not interject on behalf of the third party.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are getting results for the people of Ontario. That is what matters for me.

When it comes to access to primary care, the fundamental health care request of the people of Ontario, we've made tremendous progress. Over a million—1.2 million—more Ontarians have access to primary care than when we took office. That's 94% of Ontarians. We know where the other 6% are—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Let's face it: What we are talking about here is the mother of all golden handshakes, yet this government refuses to reveal the details. Here is one detail they'd probably prefer not to tell Ontarians: In 2009, an order in council lists the maximum annual base salary for a deputy minister, like Mr. Sapsford, as

\$220,000. Even with allowable incentives, this would add up to about \$266,000. Why did Mr. Sapsford pocket half a million dollars more than he should have according to the government's own rules?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I want to make this very clear—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: On this side of the House, we are determined to continue getting better and better value for our health care dollars. We have taken steps to demonstrate that commitment. One of the elements in the most recent budget was that hospital executive expenditures are required to be reduced by 10% over the next two years. Every penny of those savings will go into front-line care. We are determined to continue getting better value.

One of the ways that we're getting better value for taxpayer dollars when it comes to health care is moving people from very expensive hospital care into care in the community. We are determined to continue—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontarians who have contacted my office are livid about the Sapsford affair, as well they should be. We have someone who quit his job amidst a cloud of controversy, who then received half a million dollars more than he should have, according to the government's own rules. Clearly, there's something rotten here.

When will the Minister of Health and the Premier of this province come clean on the details? Or will they continue to show complete contempt for the people of this province?

1050

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What is important to the people of Ontario is that we continue getting better results. Our aging at home strategy is just one example of how we are getting better results and better value for taxpayer dollars: a \$1.1-billion strategy designed to help people stay in their home as long as possible, to come home from the hospital and stay at home rather than moving into long-term care. These are the innovations in health care that I think the people of Ontario are very interested in.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. In this morning's Globe and Mail, an independent analysis of Statistics Canada data proves beyond a doubt what New Democrats have been saying all along: Corporate tax cuts don't create jobs, period.

When the Premier read the front page of the Globe and Mail this morning, did he stop for even one minute to ask himself what \$4 billion could have meant in relief to Ontario families struggling to pay the bills?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to receive the question. As I've said a number of times before, every-

body is entitled to their own opinions but not their own facts. Here are the facts.

So far, we've recovered 91% of the jobs lost during the recession. My colleagues opposite take issue with that. I would suggest that they contact Stats Canada and dispute it with that particular authority. By way of contrast, the United States has recovered less than 17% of their jobs, and the United Kingdom has recovered fewer than 40% of their jobs.

In the supplementary, I'll also talk about a few more facts to speak to just how strong our recovery has been.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, here are the facts: In 2000, the combined provincial-federal corporate tax rate was 42%. In Ontario, the combined rate is 28% and will soon fall to 25% because of the Premier's corporate tax giveaways. At the same time, business investment in plant and machinery has fallen from 7.7% of the GDP to 5%. Ontario still hasn't, by this Premier's own admission, made up the jobs lost during the recession.

Has the Premier ever thought, couldn't the \$4 billion that this government dolled out to corporations have better been used to help struggling Ontario families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: As I said, one fact, of course, is that we've recovered 91% of our jobs. Here are a few more that are specific to our economy here in Ontario.

Private sector investment in building machinery and equipment rose 10% in the third quarter of 2010; that is the strongest gain since 1998. Manufacturing sales are up 24% compared to 2009. Let's take a look at the auto sector, comparing March of this year to March of last year: For GM, sales are up 26%; for Chrysler, they recorded their 16th consecutive month of year-over-year sales growth; and Ford has had the best March in a decade. Those are facts.

The fact is, our economy is turning the corner, and our tax reforms are helping that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, this is how things look to me: Statistics Canada data proves that corporate tax cuts don't create jobs. Even the federal Liberal leader says, "Make me Prime Minister because I don't believe corporate tax cuts create jobs." Ontario families worried about jobs, about reduced incomes and about soaring household bills don't believe corporate tax cuts create jobs either.

Why won't the Premier do the right thing and redirect at least some of his \$4 billion of corporate tax giveaways to things that make life affordable for Ontario's families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I want to remind my honourable colleague of a few of the facts. We now know that we've recovered 91% of our jobs. We now know that, when it comes to specific indicators like the auto sector, manufacturing and year-over-year growth, Ontario is doing better than any of the other provinces.

I would also encourage my honourable colleague to heed the advice offered by former Prime Minister Tony

Blair, who said this: "In the past, social democrats became identified with high taxes, especially on business. Modern social democrats recognize that in the right circumstances, tax reform" and reducing the tax burden "can play a critical part in meeting their wider social objectives."

We are reducing the tax burden on businesses and families to strengthen the economy so we can have better education, better health care and better social supports.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is again to the Minister of Health. In June 2009, Sarah Kramer left eHealth Ontario in disgrace, just as the billion-dollar boondoggle was unfolding. It was well reported in the media at the time that the former CEO, who was hand-picked by the Premier of Ontario himself, was handed a \$317,000 severance. Yet the sunshine list last week shows that you paid Kramer another \$106,000.

Since the Ontario PC caucus and the government's own ministry have confirmed it was not a severance, why did Ontario families have to pay another \$106,000 on top of the \$317,000 she was given as a gift on the way out?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm thankful for the question. What I want to say is that I am restricted in what I can say, as the member opposite well knows, about those arrangements.

What I can reiterate is our commitment to keep on moving forward when it comes to eHealth, because eHealth is making a real difference for people. And we are not alone in advocating a continuation with eHealth. Let me read from the Toronto Star—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Release yourself from the chains.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): If the member from Renfrew wants to be released so badly, I do have the power to set you free.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me read a quote from Dr. Suzanne Strasberg, the former president of the Ontario Medical Association, in speaking about electronic health records. She says, "This is a grand task and one that requires a long-term commitment. The expectations are both promising and exciting, and it is imperative the government and physicians get on with the job."

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Ontario families have no idea why they keep paying for Sarah Kramer, Ron Sapsford and so many others for not doing a day's worth of work on their behalf, particularly in the health care system.

You paid Sarah Kramer over \$100,000 after she had been given a quarter-million-dollar severance, after she had presided over the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle. Now she's fled to the United States to take another job. So we want to know: Why did you continue to pay Sarah Kramer after the severance was out? Is it because you cut the same deal that you cut Gérald Savoie from the Mont-

fort Hospital, who, after two years of not doing a thing, will actually be paid over \$1 million? Will Sarah Kramer be on the sunshine list, just like Gérald Savoie is, next year?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I know the party opposite is having great fun with this. What is important to me—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. I would just ask that they be conscious of these desks; they are antiques and we do not want to damage them permanently.

Please continue.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: On this side of the House, we're determined to continue to get results for people, and that includes the people of Nepean–Carleton riding. We now have two family health teams in Nepean–Carleton with 28 doctors and 15 health care professionals providing care to over 30,000 patients, 8,000 of them previously unattached under your watch.

Under their watch, Speaker, it was a different story. They cut funding to hospitals. At the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, for example, they cut \$6.3 million. Almost 11% of the budget was slashed when they took office. Ottawa—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1100

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Under the watch of CEO Rosemarie Leclair, Hydro Ottawa spent tens of thousands of dollars last year hosting corporate clients in luxury boxes at Ottawa Senators games even as they were hiking hydro rates paid by residents and businesses.

Why won't the Premier condemn the former Hydro Ottawa CEO's waste of taxpayers' money instead of condoning her actions by appointing her as chair to the Ontario Energy Board?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: As the member knows, Hydro Ottawa is registered as a private company, and it is indeed wholly owned by the city of Ottawa. I want to commend the mayor of Ottawa today for his prompt response on this matter. It's always good to see our municipal partners working hard to ensure good value for ratepayers.

That's very much in sync with the approach that we're taking and the culture that we're building in our own energy agencies. Over the last year, we've worked very hard with our energy agencies to save over \$1 billion. Hydro One is reducing its operational costs by \$170 million this year. In fact, all of our energy agencies are bringing down their operating budgets this year. They recognize that we need to get value for money, and this government remains committed to working with our agencies to ensure that we indeed do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, excuse me and the rest of Ontarians who think the culture that you're building is a culture of entitlement.

The Premier is appointing as head of the OEB a hydro executive who is unabapologetic about spending \$30,000 on luxury suites at hockey games. The OEB chair pulls down approximately \$500,000 a year in salary. Is this what the Premier looks for when he's deciding who gets the plum promotions and pay raises in this province: the ability to spend taxpayers' dollars on wining and dining at NHL hockey games?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Once again, this is the smear-a-day NDP campaign that goes on day after day in this place. I'll tell you, though, what we look for when we're looking for people who are going to lead our energy agencies. We look for women who make the top 100 most powerful women, hosted by the Women's Executive Network. We look for people who in 2010 won the quality of life award by St. Joseph's Women's Centre. We look for people who in 2009 were honoured champions of the United Nations Association in Canada. We look for people like Rosemarie Leclair, who was a member of the University of Ottawa's board of governors, who sat on the board of directors for the United Way of Ottawa, who was a member of the Ottawa Chamber of Commerce, who has more credentials in energy than you can shake a stick at. This is a very qualified person, and we're looking forward to her serving very—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, Ontario's long-term energy plan lays out for Ontario families the investments needed to turn the inherited Tories' dirty, unreliable and outdated energy system into one that is clean, reliable and modern. It lays out the cost of these critical investments in full transparency and stands in stark contrast to the approach taken by the Leader of the Opposition, who is afraid to share his energy plan with Ontario families.

Over 20 years, energy plans indicate that these investments will result in an average increase of 3.5% per year for those 20 years, but many of these investments are needed early on, so the next five years may see increases in the range of 7% to 8%. Can the minister outline how the government will help Ontario families adjust through this period of investment?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for Pickering–Scarborough East for that question. The opposition leaders are indeed trying to convince Ontario families that somehow they can build a clean, reliable, modern energy system without increasing energy costs. Ontario families will see right through that. These investments are crucial, and the fact of the matter is, these costs are unavoidable. So we're helping Ontario families. We're providing them with a clean energy benefit that's taking 10% off the bills of Ontario families, small busi-

nesses and farmers. We're also helping Ontario energy consumers with our energy property tax credit.

Let me tell you: If Stephen Harper were to provide a similar amount of assistance to Ontario that he's committing to providing other provinces across Canada with our money, that would surely go a long way to help us bring down the price and cost of energy in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Minister, you've said in the past that the work done over the past seven years to turn around the rather ugly energy legacy left by the PC Party has been successful to date. But it hasn't been easy. We've had to make significant investments in our transmission system that have been neglected under previous governments.

You've indicated that making those transmission upgrades at the same pace as the expansion of clean energy projects has been quite challenging. While I'm pleased efforts are being made to overcome that challenge, would the minister tell this House what other potential obstacles stand in the way of making our global-leading clean energy economy even more successful?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I agree with the member. Our efforts to transform our energy system from the mess we inherited under the Tories into a modern, reliable and clean energy system have been extraordinary, but it hasn't been easy. We're seen globally as trailblazers in building a clean energy economy and transforming our energy system. We've overcome every obstacle in our way, and we've done this despite the continual opposition from the members opposite, who have opposed our efforts every step of the way.

What I can't understand is why the Leader of the Opposition simply refuses to stand up for Ontario families when it comes to Prime Minister Harper's commitment to spend our money subsidizing clean energy projects in other provinces. Harper's slogan is, "Here for Canada." The Leader of the Opposition's slogan should be, "Here for Harper, not Ontario."

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind the honourable members that we need to deal with provincial issues.

New question.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Minister of Health.

The minister is not answering simple, straightforward questions. She is behaving as though she does not need to account to Ontario families for the obscene amounts of money that are still being handed to the people implicated in the \$1-billion eHealth boondoggle.

The three quarters of a million dollars that was paid to Ron Sapsford is not severance. The Ministry of Finance's guide for the preparation of the sunshine list indicates that severance is not reported. So the question is: Why have you implied that it is severance and what are you hiding?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Just to be clear, I have not implied anything. I am not permitted to speak to the particular issue. What I am absolutely committed to and able to speak to is how health care is improving right across this province, including in Whitby–Oshawa.

Let's just talk about one thing that is very important to the people of this province, and that's wait times. When we came to office, people were waiting an outrageous length of time to get the care they or their loved one needed. We went to work. At Lakeridge Health, serving the people of Whitby–Oshawa, hip replacement wait times are down by 272 days, a 58% reduction. Outpatient CT scan wait times are down by 60%—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Minister, there's no hiding the three quarters of a million dollars that you paid to Ron Sapsford; it's simply too large. His \$80,000 in expenses alone is more than the average income of a typical Ontario family for a year. These are very straightforward questions, but you're refusing to answer them. It's like you have something to hide.

What is Ron Sapsford being paid for, and why did you give him a raise? Simple question.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I have said repeatedly, I cannot speak to that particular arrangement. But I sure can speak to improvements that we have made, in Whitby–Oshawa, for example.

The member opposite and I together were at the opening of Lakeridge Health Whitby just last week. It was a splendid day. People were worried that that hospital would never reopen—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Minister of Community Safety will withdraw the comment that he just made, please.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I withdraw.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: People who were at that event—the nurses, the doctors, the volunteers at that particular hospital—told me they were worried the hospital would never open. Thanks to the good work of my colleagues in the Legislature, that hospital has reopened. It is now fully occupied. People are getting excellent care close to home. Jobs have been provided right in the riding of the member opposite.

1110

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

M^{me} France G  linas: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Life-changing events, life-and-death events, take place in Ontario hospitals each and every day. Sometimes a family is worried and wants answers and information. But now, buried on page 31 of the 146-page budget, we see that the government has included an amendment that will block public access to freedom-of-information requests in hospitals. The NDP stood up against that same amendment back in November in order to protect the accountability and

transparency that Ontarians fought so hard to secure in their health care system.

Why is the minister trying to curtail hospital accountability by sneaking in this defeated amendment in the budget bill?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to speak to that question. I am delighted that we are moving forward on bringing hospitals under freedom of information, expanding transparency and accountability in our health care system.

We are at a very important time in our health care system because we are now starting to turn our attention to quality improvement. I think the member opposite understands how important it is that we take a good hard look at quality in our hospitals throughout our health care sector. Part of the process of improving quality requires that, within hospitals, they're able to have very open and frank conversations about where quality was not what it should have been. After consultation with the hospital sector, we have made this change that will allow improvements in quality to continue.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Let me tell you something about trust: Trust is a pillar of quality. If the minister wants to talk about quality care, she has to take into account trust.

New Democrats have been working hard to restore trust and accountability in our health care system. On the heels of a damning report from the Auditor General on hospital consultants and lobbyists, the McGuinty Liberals had hoped to change the channel by introducing Bill 122, that you refer to. But now, without anyone looking, they are trying to retreat from transparency, from accountability measures that they more or less wanted to take credit for and that Ontarians have been demanding for years.

Will the minister explain to Ontarians why our government is trumping the public right to health care information?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me tell you that patient safety and patient quality of care is paramount for us. After very careful consideration and very in-depth conversation with the hospital sector, I was persuaded that we simply must make this amendment to allow that very, very important job of quality improvement to continue. I do not want hospitals—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I can't believe it either, the number of times that I've warned the honourable member. I would just remind him that if he is going to choose to sit in that front row, he needs to do so silently.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's important that people understand that we are talking patient safety. We are talking life and death. We know we can reduce deaths by focusing on quality. I want the hospitals to be able to do that in the way they know how. I want to encourage the work on quality improvement.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Last December, the federal government announced it was cutting \$44 million in funding to 35 Ontario newcomer settlement agencies. These agencies help new Canadians get employment and language training to get settled and find good jobs. In my riding of York South–Weston, organizations such as the York Weston Community Services Centre and the Community Action Resource Centre have been devastated by the unilateral federal cuts.

The federal government's reckless cuts have hurt thousands of newcomers. Ottawa now wants to repossess the assets from agencies whose funding was cut. This will make it even more difficult for these agencies to continue helping newcomers get settled in Ontario.

To the Minister: What is Ontario doing to help these agencies keep the basic equipment they need to serve newcomers?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: As you can appreciate, I was extremely disappointed that Ottawa unilaterally cut \$44 million in funding to immigrant settlement agencies in Ontario. I've spoken with the impacted agencies and they tell me that Ottawa's cuts will absolutely devastate the agencies, the employees and the newcomers that rely on their vital settlement services. To make matters even worse, these same agencies have been told that they may have to hand over their equipment and their furniture.

I've written to federal Minister Jason Kenney to strongly urge him to allow our settlement agencies to keep the assets that they purchased using federal funds, as their contracts allow them the discretion to do. These assets include desks, chairs, phones, computers and even child care and child-minding equipment. I call on Minister Kenney to immediately—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: In February, the minister announced that the government created a one-time stabilization fund to help stabilize the operations of settlement agencies whose funding was cut by Ottawa. Many settlement agencies, including agencies in my community, were extremely happy to hear that Ontario was doing what it could to help. At the stabilization fund announcement, one agency told me that every bit helps when it comes to supporting newcomers.

Some agencies have applied for this funding to help them get through in the wake of Ottawa's unilateral cuts. They desperately need that funding now to continue to help newcomers get settled and get job-ready.

Can the minister tell us if his ministry has completed its funding application process so that settlement agencies can continue to provide important services to newcomers?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: First of all, I'd like to thank the member from York South–Weston for her tireless advocacy on behalf of newcomers in her community.

Minister Kenney and the federal Conservatives may not respect the important work of our front-line settle-

ment agencies, but the McGuinty government respects their tireless efforts. That's why we've created a stabilization fund to help eligible settlement agencies whose funding was completely slashed by Ottawa. These agencies have an outstanding record of service in their communities, and we are supporting them through this very challenging time.

I can tell the member from York South-Weston that the Community Action Resource Centre, in her riding, whose funding was totally cut by Ottawa, is receiving stabilization funding.

Ontario remains absolutely committed to getting the best immigration agreement from the federal government. We will continue to fight for fairness for Ontario and for Ontario's newcomers.

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. I just want to say that we're having a little trouble getting answers to the question, Minister, so I'm going to make it very simple.

I have a multiple-choice question for you. I'm going to give you some examples of ridiculous red tape that would restrict people and hurt business. Can you tell me which one of these apply to your ministry: limit who a business can sell their product to or which door they may sell it through, tell a business what colour they can paint the interior of their facility, or tell a business person what colour they can paint the inside of their vehicle?

Minister, which one of these red tape rules are you going to force onto Ontario farmers?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I do sincerely want to thank you for the question. One of the things that I wanted to share with the members from across the way is that we have been working very hard with our businesses within the agricultural community. We recognize the challenges that have been facing our local abattoirs, so we provided \$1.5 million to assist. I can tell you that we have seen many success stories, and the investments we have made in red tape are turning things around.

But I say to the members from across the way: We're talking about red tape. We're quite proud of our record at OMAFRA of reduction of red tape. But I think that farmers and rural communities want to know: Why won't you pick up the phone and call Harper about risk management? That—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. I just remind the honourable members once again that, notwithstanding the fact that there is a federal election going on, we have issues that we need to deal with here in the province of Ontario.

Supplementary?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Minister, they all apply to your ministry, and I thought you might have known that. When you are restricting the colour that a farmer can paint the inside of their vehicle, you have a red tape problem.

A month ago, I asked the Premier about an internal memo that your ministry produced which made it clear that you are hiding red tape, not cutting it. From what we've seen, the only action taken in response was to remind your staff to keep documents confidential.

1120

Minister, your problem isn't the brown envelopes; your problem is your red tape. Will you finally apologize to farmers and tell us how many of your regulations you claim to have cut are actually a sham?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I've got to say that supporting risk management—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I want to say that the work of our local abattoirs—do they understand, from across the way, the local product, where that comes from? That comes from down on the farm. By supporting risk management, it's strengthening the value chain. On this side, we get that.

But I'll tell you this: Farmers want to know how they're going to vote on the budget—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. It never ceases to amaze me, when certain members ask questions and certain members respond to questions, how it just gets the juices flowing in this chamber.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Agriculture, I might have been referring to you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will please come to order. We want to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to ask their questions.

New question.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, as a result of your new busing policy, 80% of the bus contracts for this fall on Highway 11 east is going to be going to two large multinationals—one from London, England and the other one from Sudbury. As a result of that, a company like Schumacher Bus Lines, which has been around for 96 years, is at a risk of closing their doors; and a company like Kamiskotia Bus Lines, the former Silver's bus lines, which has been there for better than 50 years, is closing its doors.

My question to you is as simple as this: Why did you put forward a busing policy that favours large multinationals at the expense of long-serving local businesses?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I think it's important that I take this opportunity to correct what the honourable member has presented. In fact, it's not a government policy, but what we have said to school boards, because the Provincial Auditor identified for us that we needed to

be more competitive in terms of how we engage those services.

So we have been working with school bus operators from across Ontario to put in place models that meet the needs of the school board and the students that they serve, as well as ensure that the industry is able to participate in a fair way.

We have pilots under way. We did in southern Ontario last year; we are now doing pilots in northern Ontario this year. We look forward to hearing from boards their results—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, don't try to pass the buck on to the school board. It just happens to be that Colleen Landers from one of our boards is here now, and she knows well that this is not a school board policy; this is an Ontario Ministry of Education policy. For you to try to pass this on to the school board, I think, just flies in the face of reality.

I'll ask you again. There are business owners across my riding and Mr. Ramsay's riding who have been in business for 50 and 100 years. Their bus companies are about to close—some of them will close—because of this policy. I ask you one more time: Why do you favour a policy that puts long-standing businesses in our community at risk of closing down in favour of larger multinationals?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I again remind the honourable member that it is not the Ministry of Education that engages school bus operators in local boards; it is local boards that do that.

What the Ministry of Education has asked of our school boards, because the Provincial Auditor—and I would just remind the honourable member: They like to talk about the Provincial Auditor and refer to the auditor's recommendations. I say to the honourable member that the Provincial Auditor has made it very clear that we need to improve the way we engage transportation services in school boards. We are working with boards and we are working with local operators to determine a process that is fair and equitable and ensures the people of Ontario that the dollars we are spending on student transportation have been determined in a manner that is open and transparent—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TOURISM

Mr. Dave Levac: My question is for the Minister of Tourism and Culture. As Ontario's economy recovers from the recession, tourists from near and far are starting to travel and visit again. Visitors are coming from national and international destinations. In 2008, visitors spent \$22 billion in Ontario. That is why it's important for the government to make strategic investments and have significant economic impact across the province. This will attract even more visitors, keeping them coming back,

creating jobs and supporting the economic growth of our regions.

Minister, effective investment is critical to making Ontario's tourism industry competitive. Can the minister please tell us what the government is doing to make Ontario's tourism industry competitive?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member from Brant for his question and also for his wonderful advocacy in promoting tourism in Ontario. Again, I want to, one more time, welcome some of our tourism partners to the House today.

In 2010, more than 104 million Canadians travelled to Ontario, more than any other province or territory. Our government has made significant investments to develop a competitive tourism industry in Ontario. We have invested \$130 million to support the 13 newly developed tourism organizations. This year, through Celebrate Ontario, we are also investing \$20 million to support 232 festivals and events—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Dave Levac: I'm pleased that the government is building a competitive tourism industry in Ontario. However, short-term investment is not enough for long-term competitiveness in Ontario's tourism sector. As a former principal and educator, I know that long-term planning is an extremely important commitment to make a success.

Several local events come to my mind in building premier events: the International Villages in Brantford, Telephone City Car Show, Applefest in St. George, Springtime in Paris, Hockeyfest, the Brantford International Jazz Festival, Frosty Fest and, of course, Six Nations Pow Wow. That's why we need the government to continue to invest beyond just one year. This helps strengthen Ontario's tourism industry for today and tomorrow. Supporting economic growth is important. I want to know what the minister is going to do to support long-term sustainability for the tourism industry in Ontario.

Hon. Michael Chan: Families in Ontario stand to benefit from our investment in tourism. It is a key economic driver to job creation. This is why, in our recent budget, our government has committed an additional \$18.75 million to support the regional tourism organizations for 2012. This is in addition to the \$40 million in ongoing funding.

If passed, our budget will help tourism regions attract more visitors, strengthening, of course, our economy. The budget will also make our \$20 million in Celebrate Ontario permanent.

We are on the right track with our investment. It is helping families, attracting visitors, creating jobs and supporting economic growth.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Last Tuesday, your government released a budget that included a provision to close the so-called underutilized jails in Sarnia, Owen Sound and Walkerton.

Minister, if you had bothered to pick up the phone and call the mayor of Sarnia, you would have found out that in fact the Sarnia jail is over their maximum capacity. I understand, however, that just minutes ago your Minister of Public Safety has agreed to meet with the mayor of Sarnia on this issue. I say: too little, too late.

In fact, a report by your own government says that the Sarnia jail is at 105% capacity. If you had bothered to call the mayors of Owen Sound and Sarnia, you would have discovered that those prisoners are actually sleeping on the floor because the beds are full.

Why did you say these jails are underutilized when they're not?

1130

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. James J. Bradley: In the supplementary, I'll mention the 25 jails the Conservatives closed, but not now.

As you know, the ministry is modernizing the jail system in Ontario. The Sarnia jail was built some 50 years ago and requires more than \$1 million in capital investments. I'm surprised you didn't ask this earlier, by the way. It costs \$180 a day to house an inmate in the Sarnia jail and \$125 per day to house those inmates in the new Windsor jail.

Decommissioning the Sarnia jail is consistent with the government's commitment to modernizing the corrections system and closing some of the older, less efficient jails to ensure we have a correctional system that is safe—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Minister, that's all well and good, but you're closing the jail in Sarnia and moving those prisoners to a new superjail in Windsor, which happens to be in the finance minister's riding. It must be a coincidence. You claim that this is the best choice, but it seems that you are alone in that assumption. Unlike you, I have spoken to the mayor of Sarnia, the OPP, the police chief of Sarnia, the Canadian border services, the two native police forces, and the president of OPSEU, who represents all the workers. Frankly, this is becoming a hallmark of your government, and my constituents want answers.

Minister, is it your opinion that you always know best and it's simply not worth you or your ministry's time to speak to those on the ground who have to live with your decisions?

Hon. James J. Bradley: This is very interesting.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: This is very interesting. The members had a chance for several days to ask this. I know why he hasn't—because the government of which he is now part closed jails in Cobourg, Haileybury, Waterloo, Wellington, Parry Sound, Barrie, Peterborough, Guelph, Cornwall, Lindsay, Whitby, Brampton and Sault Ste. Marie.

I remember the member for Wellington–Halton Hills saying the following: “I think the people of Ontario

would expect us to look at how we're operating the system of provincial jails and find ways to do it better and cheaper.” I happen to agree with my friend from Wellington–Halton Hills on that issue, as with Senator Runciman, who indicated that it's the “oldest infrastructure in Canada” we have out there.

We have to make these difficult decisions. The first half of—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. Toronto East General Hospital has a long and proud history as a caring, innovative and accountable hospital. Now it faces major challenges. A number of its buildings are no longer up to standard. There is a lack of accessible facilities, and in some wards six patients share a room. There are plumbing and electrical disruptions because the systems are out of date. The Toronto Star reported that a full ward of patients were moved due to sewage breaks.

This budget that has just been introduced said the government will invest up to \$35 billion in infrastructure over the next three years. My question to the Premier: Will the redevelopment of Toronto East General be one of these priority infrastructure projects?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I welcome the opportunity to talk about the great work that's being done at Toronto East General. I will let the Minister of Infrastructure take the supplementary, but I cannot resist the opportunity to congratulate the CEO, Rob Devitt, and the extraordinarily fine people who are working there.

I actually had the opportunity to visit Toronto East General just a couple of weeks ago, where they showed me all of the quality initiatives that they are pursuing. It is a model of health care. I am very, very proud of the work that is happening at Toronto East General Hospital.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Well, thank you very much, but it didn't answer the question. I, too, am proud of Toronto East General Hospital. It's of great value to our community. It's a great teaching hospital. They provide excellent care. The CEO, Rob Devitt, has been acknowledged by this government as a health care leader. He's given 10 years of balanced budgets. That's one of the things he's done. But despite the fact that the staff does an excellent job treating patients, the hospital facilities are so dated they lack privacy and challenge today's infection control practices. For the last six years, the hospital has been working with ministry staff on plans for the redevelopment. My question is: Will Toronto East General Hospital get approval from the province to move ahead with the redevelopment and commence construction now, or do they have to wait for the election period to hear the news?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Thank you for the question. We're very pleased to talk about building hospitals in Ontario. We know that the previous government closed them; they closed them by the dozen. What we're doing here is building 18 new hospitals, under construction or having been completed. We're also in the process of extending or expanding 100 hospitals in Ontario.

We are very proud of our infrastructure program. We are very proud of the fact that the previous government, having averaged \$2.5 billion a year for the last three years in infrastructure, has to be compared to our record of \$10 billion per year investing in infrastructure in the province of Ontario.

We are rebuilding Ontario. We're rebuilding our health care system and every other piece of infrastructure in this province. We're very proud of our record and we have done three times more infrastructure than the opposite government did—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The time for question period has ended.

DEFERRED VOTES

2011 ONTARIO BUDGET

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on the amendment by Mr. Miller to the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1136 to 1137.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members please take their seats.

Mr. Miller has moved the amendment to the budgetary policy of the government. All those in favour of the amendment will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hillier, Randy	O'Toole, John
Bailey, Robert	Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Chudleigh, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Savoline, Joyce
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Elliott, Christine	Munro, Julia	Yakubuski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Murdoch, Bill	

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Duguid, Brad	Miller, Paul
Albanese, Laura	Duncan, Dwight	Milloy, John
Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Mitchell, Carol
Balkissoon, Bas	Gerretsen, John	Moridi, Reza
Bartolucci, Rick	Gélinas, France	Murray, Glen R.
Bentley, Christopher	Gravelle, Michael	Oraziotti, David
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hampton, Howard	Pendergast, Leeanna
Best, Margaret	Hoskins, Eric	Phillips, Gerry
Bisson, Gilles	Hoy, Pat	Prue, Michael
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Ramal, Khalil
Brotten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Rinaldi, Lou
Brown, Michael A.	Johnson, Rick	Ruprecht, Tony
Brownell, Jim	Kormos, Peter	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario

Caplan, David
Carroll, Aileen
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dickson, Joe
Dombrowsky, Leona

Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGuinty, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine

Smith, Monique
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 20; the nays are 68.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the amendment lost.

On March 29, Mr. Duncan moved, seconded by Mr. McGuinty, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

Interjections: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Same vote? I heard a no.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1141 to 1142.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members please take their seats.

Mr. Duncan has moved, seconded by Mr. McGuinty, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Dombrowsky, Leona	Milloy, John
Albanese, Laura	Duguid, Brad	Mitchell, Carol
Arthurs, Wayne	Duncan, Dwight	Moridi, Reza
Balkissoon, Bas	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Murray, Glen R.
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Naqvi, Yasir
Bentley, Christopher	Gravelle, Michael	Oraziotti, David
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoskins, Eric	Pendergast, Leeanna
Best, Margaret	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brotten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramal, Khalil
Brown, Michael A.	Johnson, Rick	Rinaldi, Lou
Brownell, Jim	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Cansfield, Donna H.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sandals, Liz
Caplan, David	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Carroll, Aileen	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Chan, Michael	Matthews, Deborah	Sousa, Charles
Chiarelli, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Takhar, Harinder S.
Colle, Mike	McGuinty, Dalton	Van Bommel, Maria
Crozier, Bruce	McMeekin, Ted	Wilkinson, John
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dickson, Joe	Meilleur, Madeleine	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hillier, Randy	O'Toole, John
Bailey, Robert	Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bisson, Gilles	Jones, Sylvia	Prue, Michael
Chudleigh, Ted	Kormos, Peter	Savoline, Joyce
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tabuns, Peter
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul	Yakubuski, John
Hampton, Howard	Munro, Julia	
Hardeman, Ernie	Murdoch, Bill	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 63; the nays are 28.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

It is therefore resolved that the House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I noted with great interest that, as we know, today is Tartan Day in the province of Ontario. It's very impressive to see the number of members who are wearing either their own tartans or the provincial tartans here in the chamber today.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Yakabuski tartan.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Yakabuski tartan—we'll add that one to the Pidwerbeski tartan.

There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1146 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TARTAN DAY

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I'm proud to announce to my fellow members and Ontarians that 20 years ago my Tartan Day resolution was passed with unanimous support of this House, recognizing April 6 as Tartan Day in Ontario.

April 6, 1320, is when Scotland declared independence from England. One way we like to observe this important day is by wearing something tartan. I'm wearing the official Ontarian tartan today, adopted through a bill first introduced by our former colleague Lillian Ross and then assumed by me. The Tartan Act too passed with our unanimous consent.

While it may appear to be a skirt to some, my kilt represents a proud history. A descendent of the battle garb worn by Roman soldiers, the kilt is an ancient form of dress used by Scots. It has come to represent resolve and determination, qualities Ontarians and Canadians hold dear.

One would be hard-pressed to find an aspect of our culture, laws or government that has not been positively impacted by the Scots. Scot educators and community leaders founded the U of T as King's College; a Scot by the name of Fergus founded the Ontario Agricultural College; and it was a Scot by the name of Alexander Graham Bell who invented the telephone.

This is our heritage. Tartan Day justifiably represents all Ontarians, and on its 20th anniversary it continues to embody the rich history of our province and the strong character of its citizens.

I'd also like to recognize and thank all the members who wore tartan today.

EVA'S PHOENIX

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Today I want to take the time to honour an organization that is making a huge con-

tribution in my community. Located in Liberty Village, Eva's Phoenix provides safe shelter, training, counselling and a wide range of innovative programs to help homeless and at-risk youth lead productive, self-sufficient and healthy lives.

For the last 10 years, Eva's Phoenix has provided a model for integrated service providers that has been recognized by a number of different organizations. Among others, it has received the 2010 Charity Intelligence-recommended award, the 2010 Harlequin More Than Words award, the 2007 Vital Ideas award, the Harry Jerome award and the City Liveability award.

More importantly, this shelter has changed the lives of 1,183 youth by teaching them that there is hope for a way out of the streets for them. From encouraging them to excel in post-secondary education to showing them ways to cook a healthy, home-cooked meal, the dedicated workers and volunteers at Eva's Phoenix have made my riding and the city of Toronto a better place to live for all of us.

Unfortunately, the centre's current location is on land that is being reviewed by the city of Toronto for possible redevelopment. At a time when our youth are still feeling the effects of the worst economic crisis in 80 years, the city of Toronto cannot afford to do away with a program as socially, economically and creatively innovative as Eva's Phoenix.

CORNWALL COLLEGIATE AND VOCATIONAL SCHOOL

Mr. Jim Brownell: I rise in the House today to acknowledge a school in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry that is celebrating 205 years of education this year. As a 1968 graduate of the Cornwall Collegiate and Vocational School, I am proud to recognize the history and achievements of this school.

Cornwall Collegiate and Vocational School was founded in 1806 by Bishop John Strachan as the Cornwall Grammar School. Strachan is also recognized for founding the University of Toronto.

Over the years, CCVS has been through several physical changes. The 1944 earthquake that shook Cornwall destroyed the middle section of the school, which had to be rebuilt.

Apart from the physical changes, the school has gone through many academic changes. In 2002, the school's grades 9 and 10 population were moved to St. Lawrence and General Vanier intermediate schools, while grades 11 and 12 from those schools were subsequently moved to CCVS. In September of this year, CCVS will change once again to accommodate grades 7 to 12 students.

To celebrate the school's 250th anniversary this year, CCVS is holding a homecoming on July 15 to 17. I encourage CCVS graduates of all years to register for the homecoming on their website at www.ccvshomecoming.ca.

I take great pride in recognizing Cornwall Collegiate and Vocational School today as the oldest continuously

operating school in Upper Canada—Ontario, today. I invite all members to join me in celebrating the successes of CCVS. May it have many more years of quality education to look forward to.

LLOYD VAN DUSEN

Mr. Steve Clark: It's truly an honour to speak today about one gentleman in my riding whose legacy makes him one of the great horse plowmen in Ontario's history. Lloyd Van Dusen won his first International Plowing Match in 1939, at the age of 17, when he competed on home turf when the match took place in Brockville. He was a winner in his debut on the international stage. That title was the first of four IPM championships Lloyd would go on to win in a remarkable career behind the plow that spanned nearly seven decades.

Before his retirement from competition in 2007, Lloyd added many other provincial championships and Leeds county titles to his collection. More important than those titles, Lloyd kept alive the time-honoured tradition of horse-drawn plowing. He has maintained that important link to our rural past by patiently teaching his craft to younger plowmen, some of whom went on to become provincial champions.

It was a special day in 2007 when Lloyd hitched up his team to compete again on home turf, when the International Plowing Match returned to Leeds–Grenville after 68 years. Incredibly, he was there in Crosby just months after breaking his leg in a fall. As one of the people who helped bring the IPM to Leeds–Grenville in 2007, I can tell you: Lloyd's participation was something none will forget.

Next week, the Leeds county plowmen's association is hosting a special tribute evening for Lloyd Van Dusen. I regret I'll be unable to attend because of our deliberations here in the Legislative Assembly. But I didn't want to miss a chance to tell everyone in Ontario about this remarkable gentleman. So, on behalf of everyone in Leeds–Grenville, I want to offer congratulations to Lloyd Van Dusen and his wife, Eileen.

SEARCH COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Last Wednesday evening, Search Community Mental Health Services in Strathroy, in my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, held an art raffle and auction to raise funds and awareness for local mental health services. Some 100 attendees had a chance to bid on paintings from local artists, and they raised \$4,200.

Search Community Mental Health Services first opened their doors in October of 1979 to address the lack of mental health services available to residents in Strathroy and west Middlesex. With two full-time staff in the basement of the Salvation Army, Search reached out to provide evening support groups, social and recreational programs, and support and counselling programs.

They were there for my constituents during the farm crisis of the early 1980s, a time which was very stressful for many across rural Ontario.

Over the 30 years that Search has operated in Strathroy, they have moved multiple times and grown to 23 staff. Search has introduced various programs, including individual counselling, a women's support program, a rural resource centre, and on-call crisis workers. They have launched a website now, with resources in education for community members. In 2003, Search Community Mental Health Services was the recipient of the Canadian Mental Health Association Champion of Mental Health Award.

Search is very progressive in their approach to fundraising and they have participated in our microFIT program by installing a rooftop solar panel that will be used in order to raise monies so they can continue the important work that they do for my constituents.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS SERVICES

Mr. John Yakabuski: I would like to congratulate two members of the House. First is the member from Whitby–Oshawa and Ontario PC deputy leader. The second is the member from Dufferin–Caledon.

On March 9 of this year, the member from Whitby–Oshawa, supported by the member from Dufferin–Caledon, moved an opposition day motion. That motion was subsequently voted on and approved by this House.

1510

The motion called on the McGuinty Liberals to table a mental health and addictions plan that reflects the recommendations made by the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions within 60 days. Both members took part in the all-party Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. In fact, it was the member for Whitby–Oshawa who brought the original motion to strike the committee. She subsequently served as Vice-Chair.

I truly believe it was through the work of these members on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions and their successful opposition day motion that the McGuinty Liberals were forced to add mental health and addictions to this year's budget speech. Otherwise, I think it would be another example and a continuation of the McGuinty government paying lip service and lip service alone to the problems associated with mental health and addictions in this province.

I want to congratulate the members from Whitby–Oshawa and Dufferin–Caledon for their tremendous work and their service to Ontario.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Mario Sergio: I had the pleasure of attending a budget breakfast this week with faculty and staff from York University at the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce, hosted by my colleagues MPPs Greg Sorbara, Helena Jacek, Reza Moridi and the Honourable Michael Chan.

The budget was warmly received by all those in attendance. In particular, the unprecedented announcement by our government of 60,000 more post-secondary spaces was welcomed by York University. Mamdouh Shoukri, president and vice-chancellor of York University, says that the university is looking forward to continuing to work with this government, and that this support will allow York to continue in its effort to become a more comprehensive university.

My riding of York West is host to York University, the third-largest university in the country and home to over 50,000 students and 7,000 faculty members and staff. This commitment of 60,000 more spaces in post-secondary institutions will no doubt benefit York University and its prospective students. It therefore gives me great pleasure to rise today in the House and share in the elation of this dynamic community.

As for York University, I look forward to watching it evolve further into a comprehensive university to continue to meet the needs of future generations and play a crucial role in the cultural, social, educational and economic development of our local and, indeed, the international community.

HEALTHY LIVING

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I want to publicly thank Dr. Michael Tam, the president of the Anti-Aging Healing Arts Center, who came to Davenport to present his short guide to great health. Essentially, it says the following: "You are what you eat, you are what you drink and you are what you think."

"You are what you eat." He's recommending consuming a diet rich in fibre and antioxidant-rich fruits and vegetables. But his real contribution is the connection between the mind and the body. He says that that is a very important distinction we have to understand. He says the following: "A lie detector test is the quickest way to show that every cell in your body is affected by your thinking. For most people who are hooked up on a monitoring device ... even a simple lie will be clearly visible. Why? An uncomfortable" thought and "question will lead to sweating, increased heart rate, variable breathing rates, and other irregularities. We are able to conclude, without hesitation, that every emotive thought leaves a trace in your body. For example, habitual depressive and negative thoughts even begin to shut down the immune system and an embarrassing thought causes millions of cells to turn red-hot" in your face.

"But the effects of thoughts on the body can be positive. With things like meditation, friendship, guided imagery, prayer, biofeedback, and laughter, you can literally send healing messages to your brain, reducing stress and boosting your immune system." Many hospitals today are already integrating these approaches and these healing methods in their patient care for more effective and lasting recovery.

We say to Dr. Michael Tam, thank you very much, and we need more of this. You can find it in my calendar of 2011.

CANCER SCREENING

Ms. Helena Jaczek: In 2008, this province and the entire world faced the greatest recession since the Great Depression eight decades ago. But the McGuinty government steered Ontario through the downturn, and I am happy to say that last week's budget shows our province has turned the corner. Now, our government can build on that progress with targeted investments in the services Ontario families need, and there's nothing more important than Ontarians' health and the health of their loved ones.

That's why the McGuinty government is investing an additional \$15 million over the next three years to provide 90,000 more breast screening exams. Breast cancer is the most frequently diagnosed type of cancer among Ontario women and the second leading cause of cancer deaths. Detecting cancer at the earliest possible moment is vital. This funding will allow young women who are at high risk for breast cancer to benefit from the high-quality services provided by the Ontario breast screening program.

Contrast this with the previous Conservative government, which closed 28 hospitals, fired 6,200 nurses, comparing them to hula hoops. The new Leader of the Opposition now plans to slash \$3 billion out of health care funding. We think that's the wrong approach. The McGuinty government understands that investment in health care saves lives, and that's the right thing to do for Ontario families.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(b), the following change be made to the ballot list dated March 9, 2011, for private members' public business: Mr. Arnott, Mr. Hardeman and Mr. Bailey exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Hardeman assumes ballot item number 64, Mr. Arnott assumes ballot item number 14 and Mr. Bailey assumes ballot item number 4; and that notice for ballot item number 4 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

IVAN THRASHER

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allocated to each party to speak in remembrance of the late Ivan Thrasher.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

I'd like to welcome to the Speaker's gallery, here today for the tribute to Ivan William Thrasher, member for Windsor–Sandwich in the 27th Parliament: Orpha Thrasher, his wife; his son Jeff Thrasher; daughter Ruth Parent; daughter Shelley Thrasher; daughter Rose Barlow and her husband, Mike Barlow; grandson Matthew Parent; granddaughter Rachel Uytenbogaart; grandson Ben Kelly; granddaughter Rylee Thrasher; Patricia Wright-Bodig; Rachel Bodig; and Theo Bodig. They are seated in the Speaker's gallery. On behalf of the Legislature, welcome to Queen's Park today.

Mr. Frank Klees: It is a real honour for me to stand in my place and represent the Progressive Conservative caucus as we pay tribute to a former colleague. I want to, as well, extend a very special invitation to the family. Orpha Thrasher knows this place. She heard about it as well through her husband, who I'm sure on many occasions would come home and express his frustration with how things are done here or not done here.

It was Frank Sinatra who was fond of saying, "May you live to be 100." Our former colleague in this House, Ivan William Thrasher, almost reached that goal in his own richly fulfilled life. In fact, I understand that he is prominently featured on the website entitled *myjourney-to100.com*, and I believe that he would have us all visit that website regularly.

Born to William and Ruby Thrasher on May 21, 1914, at Amherstburg, Ontario, Ivan was a graduate of the universities of Toronto and Windsor. Ivan joined the Canadian Armed Forces in 1940 and served in the first and second regiment until June 1945. He was in the army survey crew and was assigned to battlefields in Africa and Italy before he arrived in the Netherlands. He returned to Holland for the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Holland, where he befriended his hosts Karel and Ada Sipkes of Apeldoorn.

Ivan married his wife, Orpha, on March 8, 1946, and that's when his life really began—so Orpha tells me. They became the proud parents of five children: Shelley, Jeff, Ruby, Ruth and Rosemary.

1520

Having settled in Ruthven, Ontario, Ivan began his working life as a turkey farmer. For those who don't know, Ruthven is situated halfway between Leamington and Kingsville. And for those of you who may know this and don't care, it is the little village where I first lived after I immigrated to this country in 1956. It's a wonderful little village and it is a place that I remember very fondly.

I also remember very fondly the first time I met Ivan Thrasher. I was the sacrificial lamb for the Progressive Conservative Party in 1975. At that point, I was convinced that I could win in the riding of Essex South. So I sought out, of course, the elder statesman, the only Progressive Conservative who'd won for decades—but that's going to change. He, of course, was Ivan Thrasher. I paid the visit, as a young man, and I asked him his advice. He said, "Frank, don't do it." I knew that this was a man of wisdom, but of course, being young and

inexperienced, I didn't listen. So I did run. I did not win, as he predicted. I ran again in 1977 and didn't win again. Anyway, that's another story. We're here to talk about Ivan.

Ivan's next career was in real estate. Through his efforts, Thrasher Real Estate became very well known throughout the Windsor and Essex county area. In 1964, Ivan was elected to the provincial Legislature as the Progressive Conservative MPP for Windsor–Sandwich. During that by-election campaign, Ivan, the consummate entrepreneur and promoter and marketer, arranged for a tugboat to tow a gigantic election sign back and forth along the Detroit River waterfront. After his electoral victory as a PC member in what, as I mentioned, is, or was, a largely Liberal territory, then-Premier John Robarts made a point of attending Ivan's swearing-in ceremony. It was that special.

As an MPP, Ivan was an ardent champion for the construction of the E.C. Row Expressway. As Ivan said, looking back, "I think I could have had it finished in a couple of years." The reality is that the expressway became a political football in ensuing years, subject to so many delays over the next three decades that it went into the Guinness Book of Records as the world's slowest highway project. The next one will be the 407.

His personal dream when he entered politics was to obtain federal and provincial co-operation on a plan to build multi-sport athletic facilities for youth in communities across the country. He dreamed of doing this because of his commitment to young people and also because he was a strong supporter of the Olympic games and he believed that Canada should develop more world-class athletes. But as Ivan admitted, in frustration, "I never got to first base with that. Getting federal and provincial governments to agree on the project was impossible." Well, Ivan, not much has changed. But we're grateful for his optimism and the fact that he did what he believed he was called to do.

Ivan always said he enjoyed making a difference in the lives of the constituents he represented at Queen's Park. He helped them navigate the red tape of government on practical issues such as pension and workers' compensation claims. As Ivan himself said, "It was unbelievable how many people I was able to do something for." That, of course, was his motivation—to help people—and that is his legacy.

Ivan was also very enthusiastic about working with the then Windsor mayor, Michael Patrick, on local civic projects such as a new charter for the Windsor Raceway.

Ivan left provincial politics in 1967 with the observation, "People are getting extremely disappointed with politicians." Well, back to the future. That, of course, is a quote that unfortunately lives on today. But as Ivan did, we all here will continue to do the best we can to serve the people who elected us.

His advice to any party was to get budget deficits down and regain control over the economy. I say that here today on behalf of Ivan Thrasher and on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party to the government in

power: Get those deficits down and get control over the economy.

With the sincerest apologies to my colleagues opposite, Speaker—and please don't call me to order on this—I have to share this with colleagues. Ivan Thrasher also said this: “I still have not figured out what the Liberals stand for.” That's a quote, and I want to thank Ivan Thrasher for that quote, because it is now in Hansard for all to hear forever. I have to say to Ivan Thrasher, I join him in that sentiment; I can't figure it out either.

Ivan Thrasher followed his passion for breeding and racing thoroughbred horses, at one time having more than 40 horses. I wish I would have known him better; I would have gotten some inside tips and maybe we could have done well. It was a passion of his and he followed it.

He was a lifelong self-learner. Ivan became an accomplished pianist. In his 80s, he taught himself how to repair violins, and I'm told he was second to none in the game of Scrabble; only Orpha could tell us the truth about that.

Ivan and Orpha moved to Guelph in 1983, but they refused to call themselves retired. Ivan continued with his daily workouts of regular calisthenics, long walks and hanging upside down from a bar for a quarter of an hour daily to stretch his muscles. I'm sure this must have been very entertaining for Orpha, especially on some occasions. He also played the piano for an hour each day as a reminder of the years in Windsor when he and his brothers played in an eight-piece band.

Ivan was also an avid golfer and a member of the Beach Grove golf club, the Windsor Yacht Club, the Windsor Club, the ad and sales club, the Essex Scottish, the Moose club and the press club.

Reflecting on his varied past, Ivan said this: “I have no regrets.” I'm sure that his family, to this day, is very proud as they consider all that Ivan Thrasher has accomplished.

Ivan William Thrasher left this world a better place on January 21. He was in his 97th year. He left with wonderful memories of his 64 years together with his wife, Orpha, and his five children. Ivan also leaves behind his grandchildren Bram, Rachel, Matt, Zack, Annie, Ben, Claire and Rylee, and his great-granddaughter, Maleah. Ivan was their hero and they were blessed to have had him in their lives. So were all of us, and all the members of this chamber who will always count him as a valued colleague and as an exemplary public servant.

God bless him. We relish the thoughts and we thank his family for sharing him with us in this Legislature. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Timmons—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: First of all, I want to say that you're a hard act to follow, because you've taken basically all my material. I will do the best that I can.

First of all, on behalf of Andrea Horwath and the New Democrats, we want to welcome the family here today. We understand, being a party in third position, that

sometimes being a minority—as he was in Windsor—is not an easy thing to do, and he did it with pride and he did it with gumption. So we say to the family, our congratulations to you and our thanks for having lent your husband, your father, your grandfather and your friend to this Legislature for the time that he was here.

He was first elected, as I was reading back, in 1964 in Windsor-Sandwich, where Ivan Thrasher became probably one of the very few people to be elected, out of Windsor politics, as a Conservative. We know that Windsor at the time, as it is now, was either normally New Democrat or Liberal, and whatever the swing was at the time, he sort of went the opposite way. And it was such a momentous occasion for him to be elected to the Legislature that Premier Robarts actually went to his swearing-in and was with him the day that he was sworn in here, as we are by the Clerk after the election. I think it signifies to what degree—I hope it's nothing I said, Speaker. Sorry; I digress.

As I was saying, the Premier decided that he wanted to be there in order to send a signal to the people of Windsor of how important it was for his government to have elected a Conservative. I think there was a lot of hope and a lot of desire, and a lot of plans were made from that by-election victory, that there were great things to come in Windsor back in the mid- to late 1960's, when it came to the Conservatives.

1530

He served in Parliament from the time of his by-election up until the next election, which I believe was in 1967, when he was called upon by his party to do a lot of work. Because he was the only Conservative member from the Windsor area, the whip of the day and the party leader of the day, Mr. Robarts, and others decided, “What a novel idea. We should get him running around the province and doing all these wonderful things for the Conservative Party and give him a role in government so that he can be out there in other ridings, just saying how possible it is to win in those ridings we don't hold now.” So he spent the better part of three years doing a lot of work for the party.

I know, in researching this through legislative research, that he was called upon by the Premier to work on a number of issues, but he was also called upon by the party to do a fair amount of work when it came to those ridings where there needed to be some work done to get Conservatives elected.

Along comes the election of 1967, and unfortunately for him and fortunately for somebody else, he doesn't get re-elected. He muses in the paper—I was reading in the Windsor papers—that in his view there were two reasons why he wasn't elected. The first one was that the party had him going everywhere and not spending time in his riding as a brand-new member doing the things you need to do to be better known by your voters, so you can build that connection and they'll vote you back in when it comes to re-election.

He said the second thing was that there was a down-pour. On the day of the election, there was a great big

rainstorm, to the point that people actually decided they didn't have to go vote. So he was doing what we all do on election day: He was pulling the vote and was on the phone and at the door saying, "Hey, Conservative supporters, get out there," and they'd say, "It's raining outside. But you'll be okay without my vote. Don't worry about it." And he was defeated. He said those were, in his view, the two reasons he didn't get re-elected.

But he learned a very hard lesson, and a lesson that some of us, unfortunately, have learned even harder. I think of a particular member—I don't know why I can't remember the name—who was defeated in 1995; I think his name was Mr. Daigeler. Obviously, that's not what happened in this case, but once you leave politics, sometimes it's not an easy thing to do.

He had a very successful real estate business, and because he had been a Conservative in Windsor, from what I understand and from what research has given to me—and tell me if this is not the case—he found it a little bit difficult at times to hold some of the clients he had, on the basis of his political affiliation. He found out that because of his time here, although very rewarding and very meaningful as far as what he contributed to the province, there was a certain price he had to pay when he went back to private life. Eventually, people got over that. The people of Windsor are who they are. They're openhearted and they understood, at the end of the day, that that was just what he did and everybody has the right to participate in democracy. Nonetheless, he found there was an effect.

The other thing was that he got elected at a time—and this is a conversation I've had with a number of former members who were in at that particular time in the 1960s—when the salary of the day was somewhere around \$8,000 a year. You gave up a full-time job somewhere else, where you got home every night and enjoyed the things that everybody else enjoys when it comes to family, friends and community. He was here on \$8,000 a year, having to pay his Toronto accommodation, when he stayed here, out of that \$8,000; having to pay for his office in Windsor-Sandwich out of his \$8,000; and having to run the entire constituency office out of his salary. I think it says something of the breed of politician who served at that time.

I look at—I'm having blanks—Mr. Yakabuski's father, who served here at that time. It took a pretty big amount of courage, and a fair amount of determination and will and the want to serve for people to do it at the rates we were paying back then, because it was a very tough business. You didn't get airplane rides back to your riding. You had to take the train or you had to drive, which means to say you had even less time when it came to being able to be with your family and constituents.

He understood there was a cost to being elected, and that cost was to his family life. But they survived and they were with him all the way through, and still are today, in his memory. But there was also a cost when it came to his ability to move forward with what was going on in his life financially.

As mentioned by Mr. Klees, he was an avid fan of horses. I just want to say to Mr. Klees that I haven't found a horse owner yet who can give you good advice on a bet. So you'd probably have been better off not getting any advice; you might have lost your shirt. Not that he wasn't good with horses, but such is the nature of the horse business. But he was very much one who enjoyed horses.

As well, as Mr. Klees said, he was an avid sports fan and had a vision that partly happened; I would say this did happen to an extent—what you spoke of earlier—which is joint federal-provincial projects in order to build a sort of sportsplex where youth can go to do useful things other than having idle hands and getting in trouble in our communities.

I remember, in 1967, as a young man, for one year there was the Expo program that we built across this nation and across our province—plenty of sporting facilities in our communities. In our community, just up the street from where I live, is the Centennial Arena that was built as a result of federal-provincial money. I'm not so sure that he didn't get some effect, because certainly that did happen for a short time. Unfortunately, co-operation on the capital side with federal and provincial governments is not something that has been maintained and been in place each and every year. But certainly in 1966 and 1967, at the time that he was in the Legislature, that actually did happen. I don't know for sure, but I would imagine it had something to do with the work that he had to do.

I also want to say this, which was interesting—and I'm going to take the quote a little bit to another length, and that is the point that Mr. Klees said. This was a quote out of the Windsor Star. It says, and this is Mr. Ivan Thrasher: "At times, I think (NDP leader) Bob Rae has done a pretty good job; at times, I think he's done a horrible job." Like a lot of voters, he says he hasn't figured out what Liberal leader Lyn McLeod stands for." I want to clarify: He was talking about Lyn McLeod, but probably talking about the Liberals.

But interestingly, he was a man of his word, and a man of his convictions: "PC leader Mike Harris may need a bit more seasoning, he figures. But 'when it comes right down to it, I'll vote for Harris.'" So clearly he was a Conservative through and through and understood that, at the end of the day, he was going to back his party.

I just want to say to the family who's here and those who may be watching that Mr. Thrasher served here a short time but certainly had an effect on this Legislature. There are plenty of people back home and in his family who are proud of the time that he had here. We say, on behalf of all of us who are here today, that we stand on the shoulders of people like Ivan Thrasher, and we thank you for having lent him to us for those four years.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Guelph.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased and honoured to be able to, on behalf of the Liberal caucus, join in the

tribute to Ivan Thrasher. And Thrasher family, meet the current member from Essex. The reason that I'm here speaking rather than the current member is because the current member is the Deputy Speaker and, as you see, he has just taken the chair. So this explains why me.

I would like to offer my sincere condolences to Orpha, his beloved wife of 64 years; his children Ruby, Ruth, Rose, Jeff and Shelley, four out of five who are here today; his eight grandchildren, some of whom are here today; and the newest addition to the Thrasher clan, his great-granddaughter Maleah, who isn't here today because she's just a little wee tiny bit of a thing.

I must say, though, having read about Ivan and talked to the family, that I think our tribute should really be a celebration of a life well-lived. Ivan was born May 21, 1914, near Amherstburg, Ontario. As you've heard, he joined the Canadian Armed Forces in 1940 and served until June 1945. He participated in the Italian campaign and helped to liberate the Netherlands. Ivan returned to Holland with his wife, Orpha, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Holland, and he again returned for the 60th reunion.

Again, as Mr. Klees has explained, following the war, Ivan and Orpha settled in Ruthven—and for those of you who didn't figure out Kingsville, as far as I can figure out, that's near Lake Erie; they'll all know where Lake Erie is—and they built a home and got into turkey farming, Mrs. Van Bommel. She does chickens.

Soon he was starting on his next career as a real estate broker, and Thrasher Real Estate became a well-known business in Windsor. The family moved closer to Windsor, and then to Oldcastle.

His daughter Rosemary remembers that “family was very important to both mom and dad, back then, and we did a lot as a family, from going to church every Sunday, regular visits to grandma and grandpa Thrasher's, picking strawberries and cherries, and wonderful road trips to Jekyll Island. The cottage in Kearney has brought our immediate family even closer.”

A recurring theme from all of his children were those Scrabble games which, reportedly, Ivan usually won, but I did note that various children took great delight in reporting that sometimes they actually managed to win. But if anybody was keeping score, it was clear that Ivan, with his outstanding vocabulary, was the usual winner.

1540

In 1964, Ivan won a seat in the provincial Legislature—and I do have to remind Mr. Klees that he's the last Tory MPP for the Windsor-Essex area provincially. He still holds that record of being the most recent Tory MPP from the Windsor-Essex area. He served in the Legislature from 1964 to 1967 and sat on six different committees while he was here.

Ivan was particularly proud of his contributions, as has been mentioned, to the Windsor Raceway, to St. Clair College—and that was the era in the mid-1960s when the community colleges were just being built, and getting a community college for the Windsor area was very important—and also, as has been noted, his contribution to the E.C. Row Expressway.

His daughter Ruby recalls Ivan making the move to Toronto after becoming an MPP. She says that while he was an MPP in Toronto, she was at university and remembers going shopping with him to get all the necessities for his apartment and going out for nice dinners. So it seems to me that, as is still the case today, university-aged children still find ways to get their parents to pay for things. Any of us who have had university-aged children know this.

His son, Jeff, also joined Ivan here for a time as a page here at Queen's Park, and his granddaughter Rachel, who lives in Guelph, also served as a page here a generation later.

After relinquishing his seat in the next election, he soon found his passion in breeding and racing thoroughbred horses, at one time having 40 horses. How did that happen? Well, Orpha tells me that in 1967, Ivan, as the real estate man, sold a small horse farm on the outskirts of Windsor. In lieu of commission, he was rewarded with three thoroughbred horses, and the love affair with horse racing was on.

Ivan and Orpha moved from Windsor and bought a large horse farm north of Acton. So again, for the geography, this would put them living in Ted Arnott's current riding. Then they moved to Guelph, my riding; missed the country and moved back to Puslinch, Ted Arnott's riding; and then found that it was more convenient to be in Guelph, so they finally landed in Guelph, which was a very good decision.

Ivan was a lifelong learner and renaissance man. He was an accomplished pianist, took violin lessons in his 80s—in his 80s—and taught himself how to repair violins.

Ivan's devotion to healthy eating and physical fitness was legendary—I'm not sure all of us would want to emulate the hanging upside down part of it. His son, Jeff, says he remembers that when he was an MPP, he was trying to get the government to adopt a program that would allow all Canadians the right to free exercise by the YMCA or some other form of national free workout facility. Unhappily, in those days, they did not consider the long-term effects of a healthy population on the nation's health care costs. So maybe Ivan would approve of the fact that his current MPP, me, was actually involved in setting nutrition guidelines for food that's served to kids in school and involved in making sure that elementary kids have daily physical exercise in elementary schools. I think those are some initiatives that, even if we are Liberals, he would have approved of.

Over the last 25 years—and I've explained where they lived already.

I didn't think I had ever met Ivan, but Orpha tells me that I'm wrong. Apparently, one day during the 2003 campaign I was out door-knocking and I knocked on a door and it turns out I actually had a conversation with Ivan. And I'm sorry I don't remember. I actually had sore knuckles at the end of that experience; I had to start knocking on doors with my left hand because my right hand had worn out.

I think what Ivan, Orpha and I all share is a great commitment in the belief that it's really important to get out there, knock on doors and talk to your constituents. I'm very pleased to say that, apparently, Ivan reported to Orpha when she got home that this person called Liz Sandals had called at the door, and that he did approve, if not of my party, at least of my door-knocking and canvassing technique. So I did meet him after all, although briefly.

Ivan spoke about his values on his website, which was quoted previously. He said, "One of the most important things instilled in me by my mother was 'Love—never go to bed hating someone.'

"The other main thing is honesty. Never, ever tell lies. If you shake a man's hand on a deal, make good or die on it, if necessary."

I wish I had known Ivan longer than the few minutes at the door. Ivan was a good man who packed a lot of living into his 97 years, and he did it all with love and laughter and optimism. Thank you for sharing Ivan with us, and for Ivan's service to Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you to the members from Newmarket–Aurora, Timmins–James Bay, and Guelph.

I would like to add myself that, yes, had you still resided in the hamlet of Ruthven, you would be in the riding of Essex, you would be very close to the lake, and you would still be in the sun parlour of Canada.

The Speaker's office and the clerks will see that you receive a DVD of today's proceedings and a copy of Hansard.

I want to say on behalf of all that we are so pleased that you could be here today while we had this tribute for Ivan Thrasher.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY JOURNÉE MONDIALE DE SENSIBILISATION À L'AUTISME

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm privileged to rise today to mark United Nations World Autism Awareness Day.

J'ai l'honneur de prendre la parole aujourd'hui pour mettre à l'honneur la Journée mondiale de la sensibilisation à l'autisme, proclamée par les Nations Unies. Tous les ans, en date du 2 avril, la célébration de cette journée favorise une meilleure compréhension de cette affection relativement nouvelle et encourage l'adoption d'attitudes positives vis-à-vis des personnes remarquables qui en sont atteintes.

Every year on April 2, the recognition of this day promotes greater understanding of autism and positive perceptions about the remarkable people living with this relatively new disorder.

Ten years ago, we knew very little about autism, and we had only just begun to attempt to respond to the needs of children with autism. Today, we know that there are effective therapies for kids and valuable supports for their families.

Our government understands the challenges that kids with autism and their families face and seek to overcome every day. That is why we're determined to continue to build on the important investments and improvements made to date. We have removed the previous government's age six cut-off to receive intensive behavioural intervention, or IBI, therapy. We have more than quadrupled funding for autism and almost tripled the number of kids getting IBI.

We have made transition teams available in every publicly funded school board, and these teams help kids make the shift to school a smooth one so that they have the opportunity to succeed and learn with their peers. Overall, more than 10,000 kids are being supported in schools. We've helped almost 2,000 kids with autism spectrum disorders go to March break and summer camps. And our investments in research to examine the genetic causes of the disorder are ensuring that Ontario is a leader in autism research.

Most recently, with advice from parents, experts and service providers, our government developed a plan to significantly enhance autism supports for kids across the entire spectrum by establishing programs based on the principles of applied behavioural analysis, or ABA. ABA-based programs help kids become more independent and develop basic life skills like getting dressed, going to school, socializing with peers, eating meals with family or communicating with others.

Dernièrement, sur les conseils des parents, des experts et des fournisseurs de services, notre gouvernement a élaboré un plan visant à améliorer considérablement les soutiens proposés à tous les enfants autistes grâce à l'instauration de programmes fondés sur les principes de l'analyse comportementale appliquée, ou ACA.

1550

About 8,000 more kids will be able to access these important skill-building supports each year, starting later this spring.

While we often focus our attention on young people with autism, it's also important that we recognize the strength and potential of adults with autism. Recently, I had the pleasure of meeting two remarkable young adults with ASD at an event hosted by the Geneva Centre for Autism.

Kaitrin Beechey is a celebrated artist whose work features fantasy places and characters, often with underlying themes of acceptance, equality and social responsibility. Kaitrin says her ASD positively influences her whimsical drawings, one of which hangs proudly at the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. I am very pleased that she's here today in the gallery with her parents, Tom and Karin. Welcome.

It was also wonderful recently to meet Ron Adea, who was diagnosed with autism when he was three. He started

playing piano soon after, and is now a classical pianist and a featured performer at fundraising concerts and festivals.

En hommage à la Journée mondiale de la sensibilisation à l'autisme, je souhaite réaffirmer l'engagement pris par notre gouvernement en faveur de la création d'un continuum de services, d'une collaboration approfondie avec nos partenaires dévoués et d'un soutien dispensé à toutes les personnes autistes et à leurs familles.

In recognition of World Autism Awareness Day, I want to reaffirm our government's commitment to create a continuum of service, to work with our dedicated partners and to support people across the autism spectrum and their families.

INTERNATIONAL ADULT LEARNERS' WEEK

SEMAINE INTERNATIONALE DES APPRENANTS ADULTES

Hon. John Milloy: This year the Canadian Commission for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has designated April 2 to April 9 as International Adult Learners' Week in Canada, and I invite all members to join in this celebration.

Dans l'économie actuelle, l'apprentissage se poursuit tout au long de la vie.

In today's economy, learning is a lifelong process. Experts tell us seven out of 10 new jobs will require some form of post-secondary education and training. Today, 63% of people in Ontario have post-secondary education and training credentials. That's higher than any Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development country in the world. We intend to increase that number to 70%. New technology and new consumer demand creates change that impacts on all sectors and workers.

Il est donc essentiel que nous aidions les adultes, les travailleurs expérimentés et les travailleurs licenciés à tenir leurs compétences à jour.

The Ministry of Education works with school boards to provide continuing education courses, including high school equivalency. My ministry is responsible for education and training in our public colleges, private colleges, universities and workplaces through apprenticeship and employment services.

I've had the opportunity to meet adults who are expanding their skills in education, including laid-off workers who are turning unemployment into an opportunity to learn new skills for careers that are in demand. These are people such as Ralph Pilato, who was laid off from the forestry industry in Thunder Bay and upgraded his education to become a developmental service worker, or Michele Parry, who was laid off from the automotive industry in the London area and retrained to become a medical office assistant.

These people found a new start through Second Career, and I'm pleased to say that nearly 42,000 laid-off

workers have participated in retraining to gain new skills and knowledge. A recent survey reports that 74% of Second Career participants have found work less than a year after graduating.

Second Career is a success, and it's not the only program that helps adult learners. In 2009-10, more than 61,000 people received literacy and basic skills training, with seven out of 10 learners going on to further education and employment.

The 2011 Ontario budget announced an additional \$44 million over three years for literacy and basic skills programs.

Cet investissement veillera à ce que les services soient accessibles aux gens qui en ont le plus besoin.

In addition, this year my ministry is taking the first step to launch a curriculum framework to help adult learners quickly move from literacy and essential skills training to other post-secondary education and training, as well as employment. The curriculum will help our Employment Ontario network better serve the needs of each client.

Ontario is turning the corner, and Ontario workers are leading the way. We are committing to expanding opportunities for learning and training to help adult learners take the next step toward their future.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Responses?

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Progressive Conservative caucus to recognize world autism day, which was marked this past Saturday.

While intensive behavioural intervention, or IBI, treatment is commonly seen as very successful for the treatment of autism, many Ontario children sit on wait-lists for funding. Some families are paying upwards of \$60,000 per year out of their own pocket for IBI therapy. Here in Ontario, there are actually more children on the wait-list for IBI therapy than there are children currently receiving provincially funded IBI.

Autism Ontario responded quickly after the McGuinty Liberals tabled their 2011 budget last week. While they were pleased that the word "autism" was mentioned in the budget for the first time in three years, they still have concerns. They are concerned that the Liberal government's full-day kindergarten plan does not include supports for children with special needs that would allow them to attend full-day classes.

I expressed the same concerns when we debated Bill 242. Like Autism Ontario, I worry that this new program will not capture the children who need early intervention.

We need to ensure that the children can be identified and assessed at an early age. Waits of up to five years or longer still persist for the Ontario IBI program despite the fact that early intervention is critical to a child achieving their full developmental potential.

I have heard from parents who have been told by the school system to return their children back to paid

daycare because at least in the child care setting they are actually getting services, and they don't in the school system. It is shameful.

I had the opportunity today to meet with the Ontario Association of Children's Rehabilitation Services, and they're concerned about the same issue.

On World Autism Awareness Day, we have to acknowledge that families in Ontario are out there fighting every day for fair access to services and supports for their children. It is time that this government stands up and supports the children and families who are fighting not to be shut out of a publicly funded education system.

INTERNATIONAL ADULT LEARNERS' WEEK

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: The PC Party is happy to join with all parties in recognizing international learners' week in Canada. Our party has always supported and helped to provide tools to promote lifelong learning.

This week, across Canada and all around the world people are raising the profile of adult learners. Those celebrating this exciting occasion this week should know that our party will continue to promote lifelong learning and support adult learners. But we could be doing even more for adult learners in this province.

The McGuinty government's foreign scholarship plan will award lucrative \$40,000-per-year scholarships to 300 foreign students while Ontario students get left behind. This is just one more piece of evidence of how out of touch Premier McGuinty's government is with the people it serves. This \$30 million for a foreign scholarship giveaway is an affront to Ontario families who are struggling to afford to put family members, both young and old, through college and university.

Faced with the highest tuition of any province, we also have the largest class sizes and student unemployment rate in Canada. It is clear that this government has an easier time making new promises rather than delivering on old ones.

In 2007, Mr. McGuinty promised in the throne speech to deliver a \$300 grant to every full-time student for textbook and technology needs. When our party asked the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities why the government is offering only half of that amount to only a fraction of the students, the minister said, "Well, because of financial circumstances the government had to curb the program." Well, fast forward eight months and he miraculously finds \$30 million to give \$40,000 foreign scholarships.

1600

It's obvious that this McGuinty government is out of touch. That is why the Ontario PC Party is focused on getting back to the basics and reinvesting Ontario dollars in Ontario students, both young and old, who are struggling to pay their way. We will use those dollars to support programs like adult learning that help to make our students the best and the brightest in the world.

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY

Mr. Rosario Marchese: UN World Autism Awareness Day is an opportunity to honour parents who, often on their own, at great monetary expense, at great physical expense, at great emotional and psychological expense, spend a great deal of their time supporting their children who have autism. The experience that counts the most in this discussion comes from families upon whom autism has laid its heavy hand.

Last week, New Democrats raised concerns from one of thousands of parents trapped by a system of inadequate programs and supports, long waiting lists, arbitrary service terminations and lack of information about decisions made regarding their children's autism treatment. With respect to intensive behavioural intervention therapy, the McGuinty government has said no child will be cut off from IBI at age six, but it's still happening.

Ask Viano and Maria Ciaglia, who came to this Legislature because their six-year-old son, Luca, is having his IBI cut off before he's ready for school and without the required assessment.

Ask Brian Powers, who lost his permanent employment, is struggling to make ends meet and has learned it will be three years before his young son can obtain IBI through the McGuinty government's program.

Ask Paul Ceretti, who made several public appeals for IBI after one of his twin daughters lost the therapy they both had been receiving and benefiting from.

Ask the families who are forced to leave their communities to obtain IBI for their child somewhere else in the province. Such is the nature of the regional disparities that exist where autism treatment is concerned. The anger, frustration, fatigue and anxiety that parents are experiencing right across this province tell us there are serious deficiencies in the government's handling of this program.

Parents are financially exhausted. They mortgage their homes, hold fundraising events, use their credit, borrow from families; whatever it takes to provide life-changing IBI to their children. They're caught in the McGuinty maze, the endless loop of fighting to obtain or retain therapy services. They file judicial reviews, seek redress from professional disciplinary bodies and lobby service providers and school officials. It's more than a full-time job.

In the first quarter of last year, 90 children were thrown out of IBI. In the second quarter, the number was 240 children. Now consider: While 1,404 children are receiving IBI, there are 1,517 children waiting for treatment and another 339 waiting to be assessed. These are the ministry's most recent numbers, but they are six months out of date. It's difficult to obtain timely autism information, and that's a significant problem. There is no transparency to what the ministry is doing on this file.

When we request pertinent information about policy and contract documents, we are directed to freedom of information. Rather than full disclosure, this government hides behind the freedom-of-information process, meaning parents have difficulty unearthing the policy rationale for clinical decisions that result in a family losing its essential IBI supports.

Parents know full well that school IBI programs are inadequately funded and are not what they should be. How many children are being parked in classrooms when they're clearly not ready for a school setting? How many are transitioning too soon and losing their potential to ever benefit?

The minister pledges a new complaints process for after the next election. It's needed now, just as the Ombudsman oversight for child welfare and protection is needed now.

We must acknowledge the parents who are now activists fighting the serious shortcomings in the government's program. Their dedication and commitment is nothing short of amazing.

INTERNATIONAL ADULT LEARNERS' WEEK

Mr. Rosario Marchese: In the minute that I have left, I want to again honour the workers who work in adult literacy and honour today's International Adult Learners' Week. This is a time when we have to say to the literacy workers, thanks for all the work that you have been doing and thanks for the sacrifices you make, in spite of the fact that, in the last 10 years, you've received so little funding. You do it often without government support.

Thanks to the learners, often who have limited access to higher education and training. Many are sole-support parents, most living below the poverty line. Many lack high school diplomas and some have learning disabilities—and the list goes on.

We thank the federal government, under the Canada-Ontario labour market agreement, for having passed on \$90 million over a three-year period. I congratulate the government for bringing forth at least \$45 million over a three-year period. It's better than a kick in the teeth, but what they want is stable funding so they don't have to come begging you for the little scraps you offer them every now and then.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Beaches–East York has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question earlier today given by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care concerning Toronto East General Hospital and infrastructure funds. This matter will be debated next Wednesday at 6 p.m.

PETITIONS

PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas supported-living residents in southwestern and eastern Ontario were subjected to picketing outside their homes during labour strikes in 2007 and 2009; and

"Whereas residents and neighbours had to endure megaphones, picket lines, portable bathrooms and shining lights at all hours of the day and night on their streets; and

"Whereas individuals with intellectual disabilities and organizations who support them fought for years to break down barriers and live in inclusive communities; and

"Whereas Bill 83 passed second reading in the Ontario Legislature on October 28, 2010;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government quickly schedule hearings for Sylvia Jones's Bill 83, the Protecting Vulnerable People Against Picketing Act, to allow for public hearings."

I obviously support this petition, am pleased to affix my name to it and give it to page Gemma to take to the table.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly and it reads as follows:

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly ... as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Travis to carry it for me.

OAK RIDGES MORAINÉ

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition which I've been presenting fairly regularly here. It's with the Ministry of the Environment.

"Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the Oak Ridges moraine" and the greenbelt; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and" in fact "a duty to protect the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier government to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permit process for the placement" and movement "of fill in abandoned pits and quarries; and

"Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what" classes of "materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment", who is here, "initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to prevent contamination of the" water or soil on the "Oak Ridges moraine"—especially on Lakeridge Road and on Morgans Road, which is in my riding of Durham.

1610

I'm pleased to give this to Gemma, one of the pages on their last week here at Queen's Park.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Pat Hoy: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

And I have signed the petition.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, signed by people from Strathroy, Watford, Kerwood and Mount Brydges.

"We, the undersigned, object to any approval of industrial wind turbines in our local municipalities until there is a full independent assessment performed by the provincial government to address the viability of industrial wind power, the impact of construction on wildlife and the environment, as well as the adverse effects on livestock, people's health, quality of life and investment in our properties.

It is important for provincial and local governments to ensure that all concerns are addressed before construction of wind turbines permanently changes our community.

"Further, we require that the proponents notify all residents and landowners in the proposed project, and that the proponents will submit to full disclosure information about the proposed project."

I agree with this petition, will affix my name to the same and send it with Madelaine.

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Mr. Jim Brownell: I'm pleased to present this petition, and I see that a signatory on here is my mother. Her mother-in-law was a home child. This reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, between 1869 and 1939, more than 100,000 British home children arrived in Canada from group homes and orphanages in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland; and

"Whereas the story of the British home children is one of challenge, determination and perseverance; and

"Whereas due to their remarkable courage, strength and perseverance, Canada's British home children endured and went on to lead healthy and productive lives and contributed immeasurably to the development of Ontario's economy and prosperity; and

"Whereas the government of Canada has proclaimed 2010 as the Year of the British Home Child and Canada Post will recognize it with a commemorative stamp;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 12, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Jim Brownell on March 23, 2010, an act to proclaim September 28 of each year as Ontario home child day."

As I agree with this, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Toby Barrett: Signatures have come in under the title "Petition for Gas Tax Fairness."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the skyrocketing price of fuel is causing hardship to families across Ontario; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government charges a gasoline tax of 14.7 cents per litre to drivers in all parts of Ontario; and

"Whereas gasoline tax revenues now go exclusively to big cities with transit systems, while roads and bridges crumble in rural communities across Ontario; and

"Whereas residents of Haldimand-Norfolk have been shut out of provincial gasoline tax revenues to which they have contributed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to redistribute provincial gasoline tax revenues to all communities across the province."

I agree with this one and sign it.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I do have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I support this, and I will sign it and send it with Gemma.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

"Breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

"Problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners' Liability Act (2005) and to implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types."

I have affixed my signature to this and give it to page Riley.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads:

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in serving Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I agree with this and will sign it and send it down to the table with Grace.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John O'Toole: I am pleased to read a petition which also represents very much my riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Petition Against Industrial Wind Turbines in Rural Ontario"—I know Maria Van Bommel is affected by this too.

"We, the undersigned, object to any approval of industrial wind turbines in our local municipalities until there is a full independent assessment performed by the provincial government to address the viability of industrial wind power, the impact of construction on wildlife and the environment, as well as the adverse effects on livestock, people's health, quality of life and investment in their properties.

"It is important for provincial and local governments to ensure that all concerns are addressed before construction of wind turbines permanently changes our community."

Therefore, "we require that the proponents notify all residents and landowners in the proposed project and that the proponents will submit full disclosure of info about the proposed project."

I'm pleased to sign it and support it on behalf of Bob Bailey and others.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today from a wonderful lady, Jessica Coughlin, from Nepean, Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in serving Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I support this petition wholeheartedly, will affix my signature to it and give it to page Grace.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas soaring hydro costs across the province are making electricity unaffordable for many hard-working Ontario families and seniors;

"Whereas energy experts suggest that over the course of 2010, residential hydro bills in Ontario will increase 26% or more, costing a minimum of \$304 per year for the average homeowner;

"Whereas, over the last year alone, the McGuinty Liberal government has added \$150 per household in hydro generation premiums, \$50 in smart meter fees and then placed \$98 in harmonized sales taxes on the average Ontario household's hydro bill;

1620

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's smart meters are forcing hard-working and busy Ontarians to pay exorbitant premiums to do regular chores, such as laundry, outside of the Premier's 'preferred' time-of-use energy schedule;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the McGuinty Liberal government immediately reduce hydro rates for all Ontarians, cease with the time-of-use pricing and remove the HST tax placed upon electricity, as it is an essential service to hard-working Ontario families."

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature and send it down with Jimmy, our page.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I have a petition certified by the clerks at the table. It is made out to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I am pleased to sign this petition.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The time provided for petitions has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BETTER TOMORROW FOR ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR DES LENDEMAINS MEILLEURS POUR L'ONTARIO (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Mr. Phillips, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 173, An Act respecting 2011 Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters / Projet de loi 173, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires de 2011, l'affectation anticipée de crédits et d'autres questions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Debate?

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I will be sharing the vast majority of my time with the member for Kitchener-Conestoga.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Kitchener-Conestoga.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I want to thank the minister for sharing his time with me today. That's just wonderful. I'm pleased to rise in the House today, on behalf of the Ministry of Finance and the Honourable Dwight Duncan, to join in the debate and lead off second reading of the Better Tomorrow for Ontario Act, 2011.

The McGuinty government's Open Ontario plan to make the province more competitive is working and it's getting results. Jobs are coming back, the economy is improving and, of course, there are positive signs for Ontario families and for Ontario businesses. We've made significant progress: We've made progress in the areas of education, health care, infrastructure, electricity and taxes, and that's the foundation upon which a highly skilled and a highly educated workforce has been called upon to compete in Ontario.

Through the Better Tomorrow for Ontario Act, 2011, we're proposing to make strategic investments that will continue to create jobs, strategic investments that will help farmers and investments that will support new spaces in our colleges and in our universities, expand breast cancer screening, improve mental health services for the children of Ontario and enhance our primary services for recipients under the Ontario drug benefit program, primarily our seniors and, of course, our social assistance recipients.

To build a better future, we must invest in each other: in our people and, of course, in our partnerships. Working together means that we ensure that Ontario businesses can continue to thrive, to be innovative and to compete in a global economy. Our government is partnering with innovative businesses, and we are creating exactly the right conditions for jobs and for growth. Over the next few weeks, Ontario and several private sector partners will be announcing new investments of over \$1.3 billion, including nearly \$175 million from the prov-

ince, creating and retaining nearly 10,000 jobs. These plans are under way; exciting business projects are already in motion.

Last week, the Ontario government announced its support for businesses that are either expanding or developing new products or new services and, as a result, are strengthening our economy.

Here are just a few examples of the public-private partnerships that are already under way:

Pratt and Whitney Canada, a world leader in the design, manufacture and service of gas turbine engines for the aerospace industry, is creating 80 new jobs in Mississauga and investing in new technology, equipment, and research and development.

Best Theratronics is a developer and manufacturer of medical equipment used to treat cancer and make blood supplies safer. They're creating 100 new jobs in Ottawa, improving existing product lines and developing new technologies.

Sungrow Canada: They are a manufacturer of equipment for the clean solar power industry and they are creating 50 new jobs, establishing Vaughan as their North American headquarters.

Kellogg Canada is creating 40 new jobs as it plans to add a new cereal production line in Belleville. This investment will make the plant among the most sophisticated in the company's worldwide operations.

Eagle Feather Aviation Inc. is a new helicopter service and they're creating up to five new jobs. The company will provide more flights in the Sault Ste. Marie region and of course the surrounding rural First Nation communities.

More than 400 of our young people will gain valuable job experience to prepare for their future careers through internships and co-op placements across northern Ontario. These projects will create and support a total of 969 new and existing jobs for families across the province.

The McGuinty government is proud to work with innovative Ontario businesses that develop new products that they can sell to the world while at the same time creating new and good jobs for families right here in Ontario.

We will continue to announce similar public-private projects throughout the year. We'll continue to turn the corner, with new growth that increases opportunities for the people of Ontario.

Ontario has long understood that in order to grow our economy and enhance the quality of life that we enjoy right here in Ontario, we need a well-educated workforce that can compete in the global economy and attract international investment. Ontarians with higher levels of knowledge and skills have better employment prospects, earn higher wages, are engaged citizens and are less dependent on government supports during their working lives. That's why our government is making investments to support additional students in Ontario's colleges and universities. The McGuinty government will ensure that a college or university space is available for every qualified Ontario student. This year we're announcing

funding to help support more than 60,000 additional students in colleges and universities by 2015-16. To achieve this objective, the government is investing more than \$64 million in 2011-12, growing to \$309 million in 2013-14, in additional operating grants to colleges and universities.

As reported in the Niagara Falls Review, Dan Patterson, who is the president of Niagara College, values the government's commitment to creating new opportunities through this initiative, and this is what Dan Patterson had to say: "This is very good news when you think of the competing priorities that the government has to deal with.... Investing in these new spots for post-secondary education is very important to us."

In the same article, Brock University president Jack Lightstone said it was "heartening" that the province has made a priority of investing in the future. Jack Lightstone had this to say: "Traditional industrial and manufacturing sectors are now thoroughly globalized, and jurisdictions like Ontario cannot let up in terms of creating an ever more educated workforce."

1630

In an article featured in the Guelph Mercury, Bonnie Patterson, who is president of the Council of Ontario Universities, says about the province's cash commitment that it is "particularly appreciated in these tough fiscal times."

In a Brampton Guardian article, Meaghan Coker, who is president of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, had this to say: "The government has demonstrated once again that it understands the importance of higher education to Ontario's social and economic future."

We're proud of our plan to see more students benefit from Ontario's world-class post-secondary education system. Our government also aims to raise the province's post-secondary attainment rate to 70%, which is up from 56% in 2002. We're also announcing additional funding for two important programs that support training opportunities and provide work experience to help Ontarians improve their knowledge and skills: \$44 million over three years for literacy and basic skills programs, and \$22.5 million in 2011-12 for the summer jobs strategy, which will help more than 100,000 students access jobs and services this summer.

Of course, I'd be remiss if I did not highlight financial literacy. This program, of course, is quite dear to me. In 2010, the McGuinty government showed a resolve to better integrate financial literacy into the Ontario school curriculum for students from JK to 12. As co-chair of the working group on financial literacy, along with my co-chair Tom Hamza, president of the Investor Education Fund, we consulted with stakeholders all over the world. We heard from jurisdictions around the world; we heard from parents; we heard from students; we heard from school boards; we heard from educators; we heard from teens.

Beginning in the fall of 2011—this fall—the Ontario curriculum will further enhance student financial literacy education by, of course, integrating more relevant content

through the existing curriculum in our schools. There will be more support for teachers to connect with financial literacy education resources, with topics that are current across the province for students and, of course, to enrich student learning in this area. It's essential that we equip our students with the skills and knowledge they need to be competitive in a global economy, and that, of course, begins with financial literacy skills.

We believe that building education is definitely sound social policy, but it is essential economic policy. Of course, financial literacy will give students those skills and knowledge that they need to succeed.

The McGuinty government transformed our health care system for the better as well. We continue to put patients first, and I'll highlight some of the programs and initiatives that we continue to stand out. Breast cancer is the most frequently diagnosed type of cancer among Ontario women. It's the second leading cause of cancer deaths. Detecting and treating breast cancer at the earliest possible stages is essential. That is why we're announcing additional funding, over the next three years, to provide approximately 90,000 more breast screening exams in the province of Ontario. This would expand the Ontario breast cancer screening program to reach women between the ages of 30 and 49 who are at high risk for breast cancer due to genetic factors and medical and family history and, of course, support additional exams for women aged 50 to 69 currently covered under the program.

As reported in the Peterborough Examiner, Ken Tremblay, who is president and CEO of the Peterborough Regional Health Centre, is pleased with the expansion of the screening program. Of course, I want to acknowledge all the hard work of our member from Peterborough, who has worked diligently on this file and, of course, several others.

Ken Tremblay had this to say: "We have the Ontario breast screening program here. We'll always welcome additional scanning to screen and detect more cancer earlier. That was good news." In the exact same article, Survivors Abreast founder Meredith Cosburn asserts that the initiative is "absolutely wonderful." She goes on to say—

Mr. Jeff Leal: She's a good friend.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: A good friend of Jeff Leal, the member from Peterborough.

"We need to screen younger women," she said. "Unfortunately, younger women are getting breast cancer more so than they were years ago and that's really scary"....

"With the new funding, that shouldn't happen anymore, she said."

Mental health problems often begin at a young age, unfortunately, and the system of supports must be more integrated and more responsive to the needs of our children and our youth. Our government will invest in a comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy, starting with children and youth. By 2013-14, funding to support the strategy will grow to \$93 million per year.

In particular, I applaud the work of the select committee on mental health, which was vital in leading the way to this strategy. The select committee's August 2010 report on Ontarians living and struggling with mental health and addiction issues and other disorders was a turning point in our government's realization that a comprehensive strategy was necessary. We applaud that group—my colleague Dr. Helena Jaczek from Oak Ridges–Markham, sitting beside me, of course wouldn't want me to single her out, but she was just one of these great people who were on that committee—and the work that that committee did. They held frank discussions about the fact that it often takes a crisis to accomplish major social or political change. The McGuinty government was convinced that this crisis had arrived, and thus the crucial need for a province-wide strategy was born.

We announced the comprehensive strategy last week in the 2011 Ontario budget, and here are just a few stakeholder reactions.

As reported in the Waterloo Region Record, John Colangeli, the CEO and director of Lutherwood, had this to say—he's an incredible community advocate and a hard worker. Lutherwood is a not-for-profit health and social services organization. John says, "It's pretty rare that you see children's mental health in a provincial budget. It's wonderful news."

In an article featured in the St. Catharines Standard, Ellis Katsof, the CEO of Pathstone Mental Health, an agency providing mental health treatment for children and youth up to 18 years of age, notes that the strategy is "a significant breakthrough and a fantastic recognition of the needs of these children, youth and their families."

"This is the largest infusion of dollars we've had for children's mental health in probably 20 years'...."

The government is also enhancing pharmacy services for Ontarians who receive drug coverage through the Ontario drug benefit program, primarily seniors and social assistance recipients. This builds on the successful Meds-Check program. We will fund and support pharmacies offering a range of services, which include prescription, follow-up consultations, medication assessment for patients with chronic disease and training on how to operate home diagnostic devices, such as glucose monitors and blood pressure monitoring kits.

The McGuinty government is committed to ensuring that every health care dollar is used to provide care of the highest quality and value while of course protecting the progress that we have already made.

I'd like to talk about Ontario farmers. Now more than ever, the world, and Ontario, need a strong farming sector. Volatility in commodity markets can make it difficult for farmers to manage their business risks, and of course, I know this first-hand. I hear this first-hand from my farmers in Kitchener–Conestoga in all three of my townships: Wilmot, Wellesley and Woolwich.

1640

We're announcing the extension of the current risk management program for grain and oilseed farmers. The government will also support cattle, hog, sheep and veal

farmers by implementing a new risk management program, as well as a self-directed risk management program for the edible horticulture sector, or fruits and vegetables.

We're already hearing positive reaction from the agricultural community in Ontario. An article featured in the *Sarnia Observer* quotes Don McCabe, vice-president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. He had this to say: "This is a program that allows farmers to put money into the system and then, when the price is too low for that year, the fund will kick in and cover some of that loss."

As reported in the *Owen Sound Sun Times*, Mark Wales, who is the chairman of the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association, believes the farm program is a step in the right direction. Mark Wales had this to say: This program "is a game-changer for Ontario farmers who today have good reason to be optimistic about their future."

We're proud of the government's commitment to making life just a little bit easier for the people of Ontario and the people in our agricultural communities. The cost of these programs will be shared between the Ontario government and the farmers. They're innovative and they'll provide bankability, stability and, of course, predictability for Ontario farmers.

We continue to balance to help eliminate the deficit without threatening economic growth, and we continue to find new ways of doing things. We in the public sector have been asking our friends in the private sector to increase productivity for years. Well, the pressure is on us now more than ever to increase our productivity in the public sector as well.

We will reduce the size of the Ontario public sector by an additional 1,500 positions between April 2012 and March 2014. This comes on top of the reduction of about 3,400 positions by March 2012 that was announced, of course, in the 2009 budget.

In addition, we will be closing four underperforming jails in Ontario, moving inmates to newer, more efficient jails to deliver better value to taxpayers and, of course, keeping our streets safer. Many of our jails are old and inefficient. New jails have a much more efficient ratio of prisoners to staff.

In addition, we're reducing funding for executive offices of specific transfer payment recipients and other major government agencies by 10% over two years.

We will continue to explore new ways to export and create value from Ontario's excellence in delivering public services that really are recognized as being the best in the world.

In conclusion, the people of Ontario have demonstrated incredible resolve. The people of Ontario have demonstrated resilience and determination in times of global economic downturn. Together, we fought back. We're making Ontario stronger than ever and we're securing a bright future for our children and for our grandchildren.

The McGuinty government will continue to strengthen and protect our public services that matter most to the

people of Ontario, such as our health care system and our education system. We will continue to tackle the deficit in order to return our province to balance.

I'm proud of the choices that we're making. I'm proud of the responsible plan that we've put forward. As a result of the continued commitment by the McGuinty government, Ontario is, in fact, turning the corner to a better tomorrow.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I've listened as politely as possible to the three major themes, none of which are actually in the budget.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: We weren't aware of that.

The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke wants the second one.

Here's the deal: This budget is an election budget. Everyone's saying it. Now, the things she talked about—agriculture. One thing it does in agriculture—the risk management plan is not in the budget.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: It certainly is.

Mr. John O'Toole: The Minister of Agriculture is saying—she's going to have to retract, because in the bill—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order. Minister, order.

Mr. John O'Toole: There are 41 schedules in this bill. The first one, schedule 1, is agriculture. What it does—"The Agricultural and Horticultural Organizations Act ... deems a local ... committee that hosts the annual ... Plowing Match to be an agricultural society for the purposes of a tax exemption...." That's it. That's a new tax. That's the only thing they've done for agriculture in this budget here. They should be applauding Ernie Hardeman.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mr. John O'Toole: I expect them, in the response, to congratulate Ernie Hardeman—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Peterborough.

Mr. John O'Toole: Now, the other thing—the comments on breast screening. There was not a single word in this document—

Hon. John Gerretsen: Yes, there is.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Minister, order.

Mr. John O'Toole: The former Minister of the Environment is also going to have to stand and retract. There's nothing in Bill 173 on breast screening. I cannot—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no. Speaker, I'm going to need more time here, because it's in the speech, but it's not in the budget. I have read it.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mr. John O'Toole: You know something, Speaker? It's clear to me that the Premier has pulled the wool right over their eyes. They haven't got the foggiest—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'll tell you what is in the budget, and that is schedule 17, which is the legislative structure to create online computerized gambling—probably the single most dangerous venture that this government has entered into. It's a highly addictive form of gambling, one that targets younger and younger gamblers; one that preys on kids who have been nurtured on video games, tweeting and computer operation; one about which there's a great deal of research that this government should be aware of in terms of the dangers that it poses.

So why the parliamentary assistant wouldn't mention that—this budget bill of this McGuinty government ushers in computer gambling that will: lure kids, 12-year-olds and 13-year-olds, with their parents' credit cards to blow those credit cards and get these kids hooked at an earlier and earlier age; generate huge revenues for a government that is bankrupt, both fiscally and morally; and create a social ill that will compound in spades the current disastrous experiments in this province of Ontario with casino, slot machine, racetrack and lottery ticket gambling.

For the parliamentary assistant to have talked about her passion to teach kids about fiscal responsibility and then omit reference to schedule 17, which is designed to bankrupt families, I find mind-boggling. No wonder she didn't use the full 60 minutes available to her.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: First, I want to take the opportunity to thank the member from Kitchener–Conestoga for her wonderful speech, for outlining the most important elements of the budget, because I believe that the opposition party didn't read the budget. It's very important for the members—not all the members, but some of them, especially the member from Durham—that they read the budget.

It was very important for the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance to outline the importance of the budget to all the people in this House and also the people of Ontario, because she talked about what happened and how many good comments there have been about the budget across the province of Ontario.

She mentioned many different newspapers from across the province—from London to Windsor to Peterborough to Toronto to Kitchener and across the province of Ontario—mentioning the importance of the budget, about education, about health care, about breast screening, about early childhood education. They talk about many different elements.

It's a very important budget. I think it's an important budget for the people of Ontario. It sends a great signal to all the people about our stability and our vision towards a bright, important and prosperous future.

1650

I want to congratulate the parliamentary assistant because, if she didn't explain the elements of the budget, I guess the member from Durham until now probably wouldn't know what was in the budget. I want to thank you very much for your ability to explain in a simple message, in simple language, the importance of this budget.

Member from Kitchener–Conestoga, thank you, because it's important for all of us to continue to repeat what's in the budget, especially about education, especially about health, especially about infrastructure, especially about educating kids, and physical education. It's very important also to talk about the agricultural area, because there was a lot of investment to agriculture, which was being ignored by all levels of government until we came and we invested in that area.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I cannot believe what I'm witnessing today. After that Premier accused our leader of not using his fully allotted time to respond to the budget, as is the tradition in this House—it's not very often that they use all of their time, but the member for Kitchener–Conestoga uses 22 minutes to speak to the budget bill? The Minister of Finance so lacks confidence in his own bill that he won't even come into the House to speak to it? That is unbelievable—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Sit down. Order. The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke knows full well that we don't comment on the absence of members. Please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm not commenting on the absence; I'm commenting on the unwillingness to speak to his own budget, which is his choice to do—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): There is going to be lots of opportunity for debate, so we won't jump to any conclusions. Just respond to the comments that were made.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It is the tradition of this House that the finance minister would speak during the lead-off opportunity. I think it is absolutely shameful—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Renfrew.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The audacity of that Premier to accuse our leader of not using his fully allotted time and actually making a joke about it during question period, and then we see this kind of performance today? It just shows where the principles of the Liberal Party are in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Kitchener–Conestoga, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's certainly the first time that I've been personally attacked for being the PA, but do you know what? If I'm being attacked for delivering

financial literacy into our schools for students from grades JK to 12, so be it. If the opposition wants to—

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: At no time was the member for Kitchener-Conestoga brought into this conversation, other than to say that she used 22 minutes of her allotted time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): That's not a point of order. Take your seat. Take your seat, please.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Either take your seat or leave.

The member for Kitchener-Conestoga.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I appreciate that, Speaker, because it means that I have a chance to highlight that this budget means 10,000 jobs for the people of Ontario. It means that we're helping farmers. It means more than 60,000 post-secondary spaces for our students. It means expanding breast cancer screening for the women of Ontario. It means improving children's mental health for our children and youth in the province of Ontario. This is important for the people of Ontario.

Let me tell you what Sandra Vos said. Sandra Vos is the president of the Brant County Federation of Agriculture. Sandra had this to say: "I can only thank Agriculture Minister Carol Mitchell and Brant MPP Dave Levac for their tireless efforts to bring the benefits of this program to the ears of non-rural MPPs. This will go a long way to increasing the sustainability of Brant's largest industry."

Speaker, I could go on and on. The people of Ontario have heard the budget, they've read the budget, and the budget is good for the people of Ontario, today and tomorrow.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to lead off debate on Bill 173, which is the government's budget bill, this being Tartan Day, of course, April 6 being Tartan Day in the province of Ontario. Thanks to Mr. Murdoch for that.

Bill 173 is the Better Tomorrow for Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2011. Of course, the government is always good with their flowery language and interesting descriptions in their bills' names. It has some 41 schedules in the bill. It does many different things, like legislative housekeeping that cleans up some legislation; it provides legislative frameworks for a few different ministries; it transfers some responsibilities; it harmonizes some tax collection processes across several tax acts and it repeals others—although I would say, as the member from Durham was pointing out, it is far different from the actual budget speech that was delivered and the budget papers. In fact, the comments he was making about some of the things not in the budget are true. As I say, there are some 41 different schedules, but there's nothing about business risk management or mental health or breast screening. Those things are not covered in this budget bill.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mr. Norm Miller: Just have a look through the 41 schedules, and I'll be pleased in a little while to go through the section on agriculture. I will point out that in schedule 1 on agriculture, that is mainly to do with doing away with a tax exemption—one good reason to vote against this bill. They are doing away with an RST exemption that used to be in place for admission to the annual plowing match, and now—

Interjections.

Mr. Norm Miller: Yes. Now when you go to the plowing match, you're going to pay the HST. Before, there was an exemption so people didn't pay the 8% RST, and now they're going to have to pay 13% HST, so in fact one of the things the bill does is enable tax collection from the farmers who will be attending the plowing match.

There are two schedules, 33 and 39, that provide for additional expenditures by the government through to March 2012, so the government can continue with its spending spree. Its addiction to spending can continue.

One specific concern that has been relayed to me comes from the Canadian Convenience Stores Association, who want to see the government keep their promise to hold stakeholder discussions in relation to online gambling, and I know the government is moving forward with online gambling. There are lots of concerns out there from convenience store operators but also from lots of people across Ontario, so they're just asking that the promise the government made about consultation be fulfilled.

But, as was pointed out, some things you won't find in this budget bill, Bill 173, are the business risk management plan for agriculture or details on mental health. This bill is very much different than the budget papers, which I have here—the one that has a RIM PlayBook on the cover of it. The bill itself is very different from that. And the budget papers as a document are disappointing. Of the more than 300 pages that the budget papers cover, very few of those contain announcements of the government's intention for the coming year. Frankly, most of that information was leaked the week before making the budget. In fact, having budget security nowadays is a bit of a joke. The government could save a lot of money by not having all the OPP officers they have on budget day because, frankly, all the significant items, big-ticket items, in the budget were leaked ahead of time, over the course of the week leading up to the budget. There was a time when you did need security and on budget day there were actually a few surprises, but certainly this year absolutely everything was leaked out ahead of time.

And yes, back in the time when my father was Treasurer, not on Tartan Day but on budget day, he used to wear a jacket that looked very much like this tie. Back in those days, security was taken very seriously. In fact, I recall one time that a roving reporter, I think, managed to find a copy in the garbage at the printing company and it became a huge issue that some of the details were leaked

out. Nowadays, you just need to read the Toronto Star in the week leading up to the budget and you know pretty much everything that's going to be in it, so I don't know why we bother having a lock-up and all that expensive security nowadays.

1700

In truth, the vast majority of the budget papers restate previous efforts and spending of this government while simultaneously painting the previous PC government as villains and evildoers. This is a highly political document, an election budget.

I'd like to start with a comment about the deficit reduction that the government has been bragging about, from the original projection of a \$19.7-billion deficit for the year ending 2010-11 to what is actually happening; they say, at this point anyway, that it's a \$16.7-billion deficit, so an improvement of \$3 billion. Well, as usual, it's all smoke and mirrors. It's attributable to a reserve. This is a tactic employed before by the McGuinty government. There was also a benefit from lower interest rates on borrowing in the past year.

But \$2.6 billion of the savings was achieved through cost avoidances, unused contingency funds, lower demand for automatic stabilizers like job retraining and a key one: extended stimulus funding and delayed infrastructure investments. On a lot of infrastructure programs that were supposed to be happening in two years, the deadline has been extended an extra year, so there's not really any savings at all. The timeline has just been pushed out and most of it was this contingency, which they put in and then don't use.

I'm not the only person who thinks the budget document lacks credibility. Niels Veldhuis and Charles Lamman are economists with the Fraser Institute and co-authors of *Measuring the Fiscal Performance of Canada's Premiers*. They are emphatic in their position that Ontario's 2011 budget just isn't believable. They were troubled by Mr. Duncan's rhetoric when he said, "Our government has a strong track record of fiscal prudence and discipline," or when he described his plan to tackle Ontario's deficit as a "prudent, proven and responsible approach ... to the challenge of the deficit." We just can't buy into that kind of fiction, at least most people won't buy it, and the facts just don't support this position.

Since being elected in 2003, Premier McGuinty has proven that he is grossly inadequate at managing Ontario's finances. In the recent report by the Fraser Institute, *Measuring the Fiscal Performance of Canada's Premiers*, Premier McGuinty was found to have performed the worst among 10 provincial Premiers at managing the government's spending, tax policy, deficits and debt.

In keeping with this reputation as a spendaholic, the Premier's deficit reduction plan allows deficits to continue until 2017-18, and he plans to add another \$67.5 billion in debt due to deficits from the current fiscal year through to 2017-18. That's just the current fiscal year through until then; they've already added \$20 billion last year and billions the year before, and they're on track to

double the debt of the province in the not-too-distant future.

That deficit number doesn't include the greatly increased capital spending as well. They're spending about \$12 billion a year on capital spending, whereas in past governments it was around \$2.5 billion on average over many years. So they've greatly ramped up spending of all kinds so that they're putting us into a deep hole. The government is putting us into a deep hole. As Fraser Institute economists point out, Mr. McGuinty's plan means that the provincial debt will swell to 40.6% of gross domestic product in 2014-15 from 29% in 2008-09. That's a huge increase.

Rather than cut spending, the McGuinty government is counting on restraining spending growth at an annual rate of 2%, and on higher revenues. As much as I'd like to believe that, there's no foundation in fact for this assumption. Mr. McGuinty has never, ever held spending down. During his first term, Premier McGuinty ramped up spending from \$79.8 billion in 2003-04 to \$103 billion in 2007-08, an increase of nearly 30%. During the recession, spending increased by \$19.5 billion from 2008-09 to 2010-11. If they stick to their plan, spending will hit \$141.1 billion in 2017-18. That's 15% higher than where we are today.

The notion that the McGuinty government will hold spending down borders on the ridiculous. Nothing could be further from the truth. It's simply not in their DNA, and they know it. That's why they decided to get someone else to show them how to do it. That's why the Premier has announced the CROPS commission. This is a very late decision. I think he decided just before the budget came out. That's the Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Service, headed by Don Drummond. It's as though Mr. McGuinty woke up one morning this winter and realized what a hole he's dug for Ontario and decided he'd better get someone with smarts to come in and fix it. But there seems to be some confusion about the PlayBook. The chair, Mr. Drummond, says health care and education are such huge components of the Ontario budget that he absolutely has to consider them. I've heard the finance minister say the same thing. But the McGuinty government says that's not true. It's worth remembering that this is the same economist who recommended the harmonized sales tax to the Premier.

The problem here is that the new commission isn't due to report, conveniently, until after the next election, so we won't know what new tax is being suggested until after we head to the polls in October for the October 6 election. To be clear, whatever comes out of this commission, Mr. McGuinty will try to pin the decision to raise taxes on them. By default, he'll get someone else to make the hard decisions that he doesn't want to make. But make no mistake: There will be some new tax or fee.

I note—just a little aside here—that in an article commenting on the budget, they say more or less the same thing. This is written by Niels Veldhuis and Charles Lamman in the *Financial Post*. They say, "In other words, the McGuinty government is delaying the tough

decisions into the future in hopes that revenues will grow robustly over the next seven years. Specifically, the 2011 budget plan assumes revenues will grow at an average rate of 4.3% from 2011-2012 to 2017-2018, while the government holds spending increases to an average rate of 2%.

"This plan would, of course, be more believable if the current government had a track record of prudent spending. But as the graph above shows, that's simply not the case."

So their track record is they greatly ramped up spending. The other part of their track record is that after every election, they bring in a new tax increase. In 2003 we had the health tax after the Premier said in the election that he wouldn't raise taxes. Of course, after the 2007 election we had the HST brought in even despite the fact that it wasn't mentioned in the election.

We see from the comments of these economists that spending is ramping up. They're predicting that they are going to restrain spending, but the track record is they have never been able to restrain spending.

What else will they do to make an attempt at balancing the budget? Raise taxes. The question is, what new tax? The most likely one, the easiest one, is probably an increase of 1% or 2% in the HST. You know, we've heard the finance minister talking about how a 1% increase in the HST brings in about \$3 billion additional money. I suspect that's what we have to look at: a 14% or 15% HST in the future after the next election.

1710

No household could operate the way the McGuinty government has been running its government the past eight years, and more and more of the burden for Mr. McGuinty's experiments is being passed on to Ontarians.

The reality is, the government is spending \$2.2 million an hour more than it's taking in. Ontario families can't afford to live that way, spending more than they bring in, nor can the government. Ontario families won't find any relief on any pages in the budget papers. That is just more proof that Mr. McGuinty has lost touch with real Ontario families.

In contrast, the PC caucus has undertaken the "Have Your Say, Ontario" survey to mark the one-year countdown to the next election—the largest survey of its kind in Ontario history. Our caucus also visited more than 80 communities across the province to listen and to get first-hand advice. To date, the Ontario PC caucus has received well over 20,000 completed surveys.

I'm overwhelmed at the response from my own riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka, where I've had more than 1,200 responses. That's over and above the dozens of emails, letters and phone calls I get each week about the cost of just about everything. Nearly half of those who responded to our survey said that job security and their family budget mattered most to them. Taxes were number one on their list of concerns, above even health care.

Hydro rates figured prominently. When asked about the family budget and the one expense they worry about most, 28% said it was their hydro bill. In my own riding,

the number was much higher—60%—and I suspect that is true with many rural areas. I don't go a day these days without getting someone opening their hydro bill and writing or emailing me with concerns about it. Two thirds of Ontarians blame the McGuinty government's HST tax and the expensive energy experiments, as well as smart meters, for their skyrocketing hydro bills.

When asked if they believe that the McGuinty government's mandatory smart meter tax machines will reduce their home hydro bills, as Premier McGuinty said they would, a whopping 85% of respondents gave a firm "No." That number proves that Ontario families simply can't be fooled by the spin that the McGuinty government has tried on smart meters. These are not a cost-saver for consumers.

The emails I get from seniors and others are really gut-wrenching, and I want to get some of them on the record. These are from my riding. Liz from MacTier writes:

"Mr. Miller, I can understand that your work in this area must keep you very busy.

"But I have thought about writing to you over a number of months.

"We are both retired seniors on pensions, which gives us the same amount of income per month. As you are aware, the cost of living is rising in Canada.

"There must be some way or manner that can be worked out for middle-class Canadians. Try as one can, your money just does not go as far as it once did. And then to have the 'smart meters' introduced.

"This may be a way of saving on your hydro, but if you are home with a ... disabled husband and have to be cleaning almost every day, just how great is this new smart meter"—in capital letters—"going to be a saving on hydro and helping your expenses? Am I to do my cleaning only on weekends or after midnight?

"When I worked, I worked different shifts. With very limited time off, I would clean in the afternoon or maybe in the morning. Just how are people working the many different shifts there are today to look after their homes and families when being home may cost a lot more when using hydro?

"I do understand that a person has to make choices in this new world in which we are living. I would not have thought that I may be living, again, as I did when I was younger: having a wood stove to cook on and heat our home; having to use a hand pump for water in the kitchen; clothes were washed by hand. Your clothes were reused and sewn. Once we called these 'the good old days.'

"I had hoped to never live as I once did as a child, but if the cost of living does keep going up, that is what may happen. There may be people living as we were in the 'good old days.' Is this what we have to look forward to: going back to wells and hand pumps in the kitchen, wood stoves for cooking and heat? I sure hope not to see these 'good old days.'

"Thank you for your time."

Another constituent, Marlene, writes:

"We are very concerned about the cost of hydro. We live in a 1,200-square-foot bungalow, two bedrooms, one bathroom.

"The cost of hydro is beyond what the average Ontario citizen can now afford. We are not referring to the people working in major centres where income is much higher.

"We are concerned about those in the Parry Sound area.

"Why is the delivery charge so high for rural? We can't go to a store to buy it. The electricity is going through the lines to everyone.

"Delivery charges change from area to area. We do not have a choice of ways to heat our home as natural gas is not available in the country. We do our best to heat with wood. But with the extreme cold temperatures we have run out! You cannot leave your home for even a day without feeling the effects of the cost of electric base-board heating.

"Our home is an R-2000-plus.

"We are prisoners. We cannot sell our home. People are not moving to the Parry Sound area. They are moving away. Industries have left. It was such a beautiful part of the province, but who can afford to come here. Every time the hydro goes up it scares people away.

"Fed up!!! Please help us!"

I received this email:

"I have a complaint I would like to make known. I work two jobs to try and keep my family going. I am about to lose my house anyway if I don't come up with \$1,500 by Dec. 1st. I get hydro bills every month just like everyone else, but my hydro bill pisses me off every time I look at it. Why is it that if the government is to be for the people, they allow Hydro to make their service charges so much that they are more than the actual hydro you use. Have you ever looked closely at your hydro bill? The service charges on [the] bill are more than the cost of the hydro I use.... It is becoming so a family either pays their mortgage and has no food or services, or they pay their utilities and have no home over their head.... We pay tax on our paycheques, we pay tax on stuff we buy, we pay tax on utilities, we pay tax on inheritances. Taxes, taxes, taxes. That is breaking the people of our country and something needs to be done."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Parry Sound–Muskoka, I just want to remind you and all members that you can't say indirectly what you cannot say directly in here. There's some language that we would normally say is unparliamentary, so I'd just like you keep that in mind.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I know the word in that last email. If I see that in another email, I will avoid it as best I can.

This email, another one, has to do with hydro again; that seems to be the number one issue.

"Dear Sir:

"We join the chorus of dissatisfied Ontario residents who totally oppose the introduction of smart meters and the new hydro rates, including the addition of the HST.

"We are both retired and have lived in Bracebridge for the last 20 years. Our house, located on Denniss Drive, was four years old when we purchased it, and it was built to be run totally on hydro, because there was no alternate

source of fuel available in this area (there still are no alternatives). Since there is no ducting built into the house, using natural gas, oil or propane is not an option for heat, cooking etc., therefore we will be facing substantial increases in our electricity bill in the future, without getting any extra income or tax relief to pay for the same." They go on. I'll skip a part.

"Bribing us with our own money, i.e. a 10% rebate but a 48% rise of prices over the next few years, will not ensure the re-election of the current government when one also considers the great number of promises already broken.

"Please keep on pressuring the government to take the proper and prudent action in regard to the hydro rates to alleviate the hardships placed on all citizens of Ontario."

Gary from South River writes:

"I have been waiting in anticipation for my first hydro bill with the 10% savings. I managed to reduce my consumption by 12.5% over the same period last year. My bill is 9% higher than the same period last year!! Wait a minute, I thought I was supposed to be saving. Dalton you are so full of it ... bring on the election."

It's clear that many Ontarians question the logic used both by the Premier and his ministers when it comes to green energy. That extends to some people who have a lot more knowledge and experience in this field. For instance, Dr. McTaggart-Cowan, a resident in my riding, has an impressive academic background that includes a Ph.D. from the University of California, a doctor of science degree from the universities of British Columbia and Victoria, doctor of law degrees from the University of Alberta and Simon Fraser University and a doctorate in environmental studies from Waterloo.

He has devoted a lifetime to studying, teaching and conserving the natural resources of British Columbia. He has been an internationally recognized conservationist and worldwide environmental emissary for British Columbia and Canada. I'm glad to see the environment minister is here today because he was compelled to write after hearing an interview on CBC, when the Minister of the Environment announced a moratorium on offshore wind turbines.

1720

I want to read some of the comments as they relate to energy. This is his email to me:

"Norm,

"I don't normally do this, but the interview today on CBC with the provincial Minister of the Environment on the subject of the moratorium being imposed on wind generators over Lake Ontario was so stupid that I have to voice strong objections!

"How a minister representing the environment can be so 'stupid'—I hope that's parliamentary; borderline—"as to mix NIMBY with serious environmental issues is beyond me. He was trumpeting the government stance on wind power over land while somehow declaring that wind power over fresh water somehow caused problems for the aquatic environment! He even had the audacity to state that wind power over salt water was different from wind power over fresh water?! One would get the im-

pression that somehow a wind turbine 80 metres over the water would somehow create a drinking water problem??? I wonder if he realizes that the blades of the turbine are above the water, not in the water? If it is the structure supporting the turbines that he is worried about, then he should have the same concerns about all structures and boats in the water that have been there for decades! If it is the noise for the fish, then perhaps we should be banning all motorized craft on all lakes in Ontario!! If it is the noise from the air above, as some seem to be implying, then that shows total ignorance of air-water interface whereby the change in 'fluid' density creates a reflective layer limiting sound transmission from one layer to another. If the concern is with the vibrations being transmitted from the blades through the structure to the water, then there are mechanical ways of reducing that, but anyway, since when did sound affect drinking water quality?? Again, if sound is an issue, what about jet skis and cigar boats!! To talk about 'pilot projects' being necessary is patently ridiculous!! This is not new technology, and the setting is not special in any way.

"To also argue, in this day and age of Twitters and emails, that he received 1,400 complaints as though that was a significant number is just silly. As an aside, it would be interesting to know how many were originals, and how many were actually from different communities. But that notwithstanding, ministers are supposed to make intelligent, thoughtful, and carefully considered decisions regarding their portfolios. Given the need to reduce the use of fossil fuels, the ready availability of proven technology, the scientific fact that wind fields over water are reasonably well understood and much more consistent than that over land, and the proximity of Lake Ontario to the major user of electricity in Ontario (Toronto) and to the power grids necessary to deliver the power, it is hard to imagine that one could not find the projects not only appropriate, but indeed necessary to protect the environment!!

"I would argue that he is, in fact, further exacerbating the state of the local and global environment by the decision he has made to misuse the 'environment' argument to prevent a very necessary activity!!! That some may object to the sight of wind turbines in their current pristine view demonstrates an ignorance on these people's part, as well as that of anyone who would accept their NIMBY stance as anything rational!! Frankly, I wish we could use wind power here in Muskoka, but the winds are not steady enough. Now small-scale hydro is great, and it is wonderful to see it going ahead. There are many sites in Ontario where micro hydro can be generated, and these should be exploited as much as possible. The High Falls solution is working really well, and more like that should be developed, notwithstanding local objections ... so that we can all enjoy the modern devices powered off electricity—ever seen a cellphone operating on liquid fuels or natural gas?

"Anyway, sorry to be so long-winded, but please don't let 'ignorance' and 'environmentalism,' often together these days, be allowed to rule government!!

"Cheers, Jim."

I would simply say that I think he's probably right with a lot of that criticism, but the real reason for the moratorium, of course, as has been pointed out by the opposition, is NIMSIAR, and that's "not if my seat is at risk."

As we know, the Minister of Energy happens to be in Scarborough, and offshore there, there happened to be a bunch of these protests going on. So that, I would say, is the real reason.

Certainly the Minister of the Environment was very creative on the CBC. I did get the opportunity to hear that interview first-hand, and I have to admit that he is very creative.

The decisions being made by this government on the energy portfolio are significant. Their full impact will not be felt for years. But this is one McGuinty promise he will make good on: Your energy rates will keep going up, and that's definitely a cause for concern, but it's not the only drain on our wallets.

From our survey, one of the other big-ticket items people are concerned about is car insurance premiums. The survey results from Parry Sound-Muskoka also highlighted how much of an issue car insurance premiums are. This was the expense ranked second with families in my communities. Despite claims by the McGuinty government that insurance reforms have reduced consumer costs, real-life stories don't seem to reflect that.

I had a letter from Mr. Donald Chapman of Gravenhurst, who wrote to me pointing out that his motorcycle insurance had gone up over 30% from 2010 to 2011 without any significant justification. He pointed out that his auto insurance is going up by over 20%, and he was writing to me to complain about that.

In February, an email came to me from another Ontarian, and it says, "I'm sure this is not the first email you've received, but I need to voice that what is going on is criminal!

"My insurance has just gone up by 33%. Same car (one year older), seven-star driver, male driver for 33 years, clean record. RBC is blaming you and claims in the GTA. This is out of control—10% last year equals a 43% increase in the past two years. I'm not sure about you but my salary has shrunk in the past two years. I feel like I have a gun to my head! Help!"

Mr. Speaker, if I happen to not use the full hour, I know that the member from Durham would like to share the time with me.

In another case, a father wrote to me—and this is certainly a really valid concern in Ontario. He writes, "Could you explain why my 23-year-old daughter's insurance premiums are in the range of \$2,200 to \$3,000 per year living in Collingwood, Ontario, while her fictitious twin living in Lewiston, New York, would pay \$740 per year? My daughter is a college graduate, employed by a bank, has her G licence and a clean driving record. She has been working and saving to purchase a used car, but now finds the insurance more than the car payment.

"How do we expect today's youth to become responsible adults? If she were at home in Mississauga, the rates would be even more unrealistic. I would like you to explain both why our kids are paying a 400% penalty in comparison to American kids and what the Liberal government is doing to rein in an out-of-control auto insurance industry."

I know from personal experience—my two daughters got their first car, a very, very used car that may have been worth a couple of thousand dollars, and their insurance premium, for a 27-year-old and a 24-year-old, was around \$3,500 the first year. It's come down slightly now. But the car was worth maybe \$2,000. That simply is not affordable for young people, particularly if you live in a rural area of Ontario, of which there are many people, and they rely on a job.

It's worse if you're a young male. If you choose to be an apprentice and you live in a rural situation, it's very difficult for a young male to afford thousands and thousands of dollars to be able to drive to work to become an apprentice, for example, a tradesperson. This is an issue we hear about a lot in rural Ontario, where young people don't have the option of public transportation and must have a vehicle to get to work. I can't tell you how many times I've written to the previous Minister of Finance as well as the current one to raise this father's concern.

1730

And it's not just car insurance. Homeowners, particularly in rural areas, are feeling the pinch too. Bill wrote to me:

"Hi, Norm

"I've just reviewed the cost of my home insurance, which also covers our cottage and boat.

"My issue is not what the cost is, but rather the increase in premiums over the last five-year period. An increase of approximately 38% to 40% seems to me to be a bit high, given the inflation rate on average to be 2% a year over the same period."

Also, I found it a little surprising that half of the respondents identified mortgages and property taxes as a concern. Property taxes have long been on the radar for property owners in Parry Sound-Muskoka, particularly for waterfront properties. It's beyond difficult for seniors who have retired in our area to cope with these huge assessment increases. It's a real worry for seniors who thought they would live out their retirement years in a cherished cottage, only to discover that between the rising property insurance, hydro rates and HST, they can't afford to hang on to their home.

You know, I've always thought of home ownership as an attainable dream for every Ontarian, but now, as costs for everything climb, it's becoming harder and harder for Ontario families, whatever the age. It's no surprise that we see personal debt rising so alarmingly.

From our survey results, it's clear that families feel they can no longer trust this government to provide them with the relief they need. Certainly, there's no relief in this budget for Ontario families. The reality is that the

government will raise taxes again because it refuses to control spending.

In the time I have left, I'd like to go through a few of the schedules in the actual budget bill, Bill 173, particularly some we have concern with.

As was mentioned, in the budget speech there was talk of a number of different initiatives, many that we support or that our members on our side were instrumental in bringing about, like the business risk management plan for farmers. Ernie Hardeman, our agriculture critic, has been pushing for that for years. The mental health investments: There was a select committee which did great work with members from all sides of the Legislature. On our side we had Sylvia Jones and Christine Elliott. Christine Elliott, I think, was the main person behind setting up that select committee, so she does deserve some praise for being involved in that. Those things are not covered in the budget bill, Bill 173.

Specifically to do with agriculture, in fact, as I pointed out previously, in schedule 1, a provision that extended an exemption from the admission tax under the Retail Sales Tax Act to the organizing committee of the International Plowing Match is repealed. So at one point there was an exemption on RST so people going into the plowing match didn't have to pay RST when they came in. As of July 1 of last year, the HST came in. You're now paying the HST and, effectively, it's an 8% increase, so where it used to be exempted from the old retail sales tax, you'll now be paying the HST.

Schedule 10, the Education Act: There are certainly concerns. I know the member from Newmarket-Aurora raised this in a question fairly recently, about education trustees and the rules around what they can or cannot do. He raised the concern about a trustee being able to actually meet by themselves with a person with concerns about the education system. They were, in this particular board he was talking about, being told that, no, they weren't allowed to meet with what I guess you'd call their constituents; they had to have a staff person. In this schedule 10, I certainly have some concerns. The proposed amendment would clarify that the regulatory authority of the minister includes prescribing codes of conduct or parts of codes of conduct and matters to be addressed by such codes, and that is specifically for school board trustees. Again, that is a concern.

There certainly are concerns with the way before- and after-care programs for full-day learning will be put into place. This same section notes that the proposed re-enactment of section 259 of the act would change the existing duty of school boards to operate extended day programs and would essentially allow third party programs to be run before or after school. But it also puts in an exemption: Basically, if you have a full-day learning program, you're required to have before- or after-school programs, and now, with the changes, third party providers are allowed to run that program, but there's an exception to allow a neighbouring school board to run the program. I guess my question is, does that mean a parent is going to be going to one school with their child before the school

day—and who knows how close that school is—then going to the school that has full-day learning and then somehow getting the child back. There are certainly some logistical questions to do with that.

I note that in schedule 30, the Northern Ontario Grow Bonds Corp. is being scrapped. That's interesting, because it was something the McGuinty government created in 2005 in the Northern Ontario Grow Bonds Corporation Act, 2004. I certainly have some questions about what happened there. There was a lot of fanfare about that program when it was brought in. It was expected to help the north. We know there have been all kinds of problems in northern Ontario. It has been one of the hardest-hit areas of the province the last number of years: thousands and thousands—I think it's 45,000 jobs lost in the forestry sector, entire towns shutting down, high energy prices taking their toll on northern Ontario. In the pre-budget consultations, we heard how last year in Timmins, the Xstrata smelter was shut down. Some 700 jobs in Timmins were lost, the principal reason being high energy prices. Those jobs have now shifted to Quebec, where the smelter is operating and they have far lower electricity prices. I certainly would wonder what happened to the northern Ontario grow bonds. I assume they were not successful or they wouldn't be repealing the corporation and shutting it down.

There is a provision of the bill, section 35, that deals with giving more flexibility to Nortel pensioners. I know members on this side of the House, both in committee and when I and others have had an opportunity to ask the finance minister questions—it's something that we've spoken up for on behalf of Nortel pensioners. So I hope this provision, the proposed section 102—which would permit pensioners of the two named Nortel pension plans to “require the administrator to pay an amount equal to the commuted value of the pension into a life income fund.”

To exercise rights under this new provision, a Nortel pensioner would be required to deliver a direction to the administrator. The direction would contain prescribed information and be a superintendent-approved form. The administrator would be discharged upon making payment, if the payment is made in compliance with the direction and the requirements of the act and regulations. “Life income fund” would be as defined in the regulations made under the act. That's something we'll certainly be looking for feedback from the Nortel pensioners on: whether that accomplishes what they're hoping for or whether they are looking for more.

One of the things that this bill does is that it enables the government to continue with its tax-and-spend ways. In fact, as I get near to wrapping up, member from Durham, section 33, the Ontario Loan Act, allows the government to finance new borrowing—this is new borrowing—apart from debt maturity, so all brand new borrowing, just in the next not even four years, in any manner up to a maximum amount of \$28.3 billion. That's on top of all the debt that the government has piled up to this point. We saw in the budget that interest payments

are now \$10.3 billion a year. That's more than all the money that's spent in training, colleges, universities—all post-secondary education. It's money that can't be spent twice. Obviously if you're paying interest on the debt, you don't have that money available for things like health care and education. The other thing all this debt means, as I've pointed out, is future taxes.

In conclusion, we will not be supporting this budget bill. The bill enables—

Interjection.

1740

Mr. Norm Miller: Okay. Excuse me, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I will also be sharing my time with the member from York-Simcoe.

In conclusion, we will not be supporting this budget bill, Bill 173. The bill enables the McGuinty government to continue with its tax-and-spend ways, and it lays the groundwork for a future tax increase. What that tax increase will be, unfortunately, Ontario citizens won't find out until after the next election. It's not in the budget, but they've laid the groundwork, and we, as the opposition, will not be supporting their spendthrift ways.

Thank you, and I'll pass it on to the member.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for York-Simcoe.

Mrs. Julia Munro: There are a couple of points that I think are worth emphasizing about this budget. The first one is the fact that it certainly wasn't what people were looking for. When I look at the constituents who have come to me in the last few months, expressing their concerns both orally and through emails and letters, their concerns are around essentially the burden of government and its effect on their personal cost of living.

It certainly started out when they began to understand the extent and the breadth of the impact of the HST, and when they looked at that—I particularly recall seniors who would say to me, “Well, I didn't get an 8% increase. I have no idea where this is going to come from and how I'm going to be able to support this kind of increase.”

Then later on in time, in the fall and so forth, the question of smart meters came up as more and more communities were put onto smart meters. Again, they had listened to the rhetoric of the government, which suggested that they would have a choice now as to when they would use electricity and this choice, then, would reflect the rate that they paid. Well, come on. People can't suddenly adopt nocturnal ways of living, which is essentially what this smart-meter choice really means.

Small businesses came to me and said, “How can I do this? I'm paying the top rate, because this is when my customers are here. This is the only time when I can make a living and do business. Suddenly I'm in the top time frame of the smart meter.”

When people looked at their hydro bills and things like that, they were looking at this budget as an opportunity that might give them some relief. They were hoping that this might happen. But as we see with things like the HST and then the smart meters, in fact it was not what people were looking for.

They also have become much more sophisticated about understanding what it means to be running a deficit, and they were shocked to learn that this Premier thinks a \$16-billion deficit is something to be proud of because it's not \$19 billion. It's still the very largest deficit in the province's history.

They also understand that the degree of government spending has far, far exceeded the ability of the province to pay. They look at the fact that the debt has increased at a rate of over 70%, whereas the increase in the GDP is down around 9%.

They look at the energy costs of the government, taking what has historically been about a five-cent-per-kilowatt-hour fee for hydro, and then paying people 80 cents or even 55 cents. It doesn't matter; it's still a huge gap. So they see that as part of the debt that is, in one way or another, accumulating on them.

This budget has not, in any way, given them comfort. When they look at what has happened to their personal spending and the manner in which it is being manipulated by HST, by changes in hydro and things like that; when they look at the debt and that historic accumulation of debt—and they understand that for every dollar that is on the debt load, it has to be serviced. That is money taken away from either their pockets or government programming. When the government has gone continually out of control in terms of spending and adding to the debt, people understand that this is their legacy for their children and their grandchildren.

They also understand that what we're looking at is a Premier who, in 2003, promised people that there would be no tax increases and then promptly turned around and introduced the so-called health tax, the largest single tax at that point.

In 2007, the Premier said, "No new taxes. I'm not kidding this time." I guess he has a different approach to the meaning of that, because along came the HST. So people now look at this budget and look at the fact that there is this whole notion of no new taxes, but they've already learned from the last two experiences not to trust that this isn't going to be an opportunity for an increase in the HST or whatever else the government might find, because it has a spending problem.

The problem for Ontarians is to look at this budget and try to understand how they are going to survive this budget. I have been asked, "Is there something in this budget that we can benefit from?" Certainly, I think that there are things. In my particular area, the \$44-million increase to spending on literacy is something that I know the members in my community who work so hard in providing literacy services in the community will certainly be most happy to see. We can look at the introduction of greater spending on breast screening because, obviously, this is something that is a prevention. So there are a few things, but the big message for people, certainly in my riding, is that it wasn't what they were looking for. They were looking for some kind of demonstration of tax relief for themselves. They're very concerned about the fact that as the debt grows, it cripples not only this

government but any future government from being able to provide the kind of programming and support in education and health care—every one of those debt dollars has to be serviced, and it will only continue to make it very, very difficult for people to be able to see their government able to make any kind of improvement while they're carrying an historic debt.

I think that there are some key things here that members of the provincial electorate understand as something that will have a long-term effect on them. So it's something that all people take very seriously.

I believe that the member for Durham is going to finish up.

1750

Mr. John O'Toole: I guess this will expunge any further time that I might have anyway. I guess it's unfortunate.

When you listened to this debate earlier today, we voted on the budget motion, which is one part of the process—a procedure, a routine. Many of the members would know that what we're actually debating today is the bill itself, Bill 173, which provides a series of schedules and implementation plans, which is quite separate from the documents that we've been reviewing.

As kind of a primary instruction on this thing, it's important to know that there were consultations held early in 2011, and those consultations came up with a series of recommendations which would be reviewed by the minister. From that, they would come up with the budget itself, which is the document, and then they would come up with the speech for the minister. The speech has things in it that are not tied to the budget, and those were the points being made today. But when you look at the budget itself and the document that we're actually debating, Bill 173, you'll find out that it's actually made up of 41 different schedules. So that's the debate, and I hope that clarifies it for some members.

If you look at the bottom line here, the real issue is that the budget itself is notice that there's going to be an election, and they're holding off any tax implications until after October 6. In the interim, in the budget speech, they have asked Don Drummond to make some profound comments. I'm sure that Don Drummond, being the person who authored the HST, is probably going to recommend that they increase the HST from 13% to 15%.

We know that each point in the HST ends up with the province getting about \$3.4 billion. With every point in the HST, Premier McGuinty takes from your pocket \$3.4 billion—for each point.

It's important to know that it doesn't come from business pockets, because the businesses claim an exemption on HST. It's called an input tax credit. So they pay for it when they're going into the product, and they get to write it off when they sell the product, and it is all dumping tax onto you, the household, the consumer, at the end of the food chain. That's who's paying all of the money; it's paid by them.

I think when you look at this budget, it is an election budget, because there's really nothing in it of any

consequence. The money that they have announced in this to do with growth, even the job growth—if you look at the total revenue, and that’s a good place to start, the total revenue from personal income tax goes up by \$2.1 billion. If you look at the bottom line of revenue, it goes up by \$2 billion. All of the revenue is coming from your pocketbook.

In terms of strategies in here, there are no strategies. There really are no strategies in this budget. They wouldn’t want to offend anyone, so they have done very, very little. I can only tell you this: When you look at the history of the Premier, elected in 2003, leaning up against the lamp post, saying, “I won’t raise your taxes, but I won’t lower them either,” he did not speak the truth. He actually put in the health tax—well, he wasn’t direct, in terms of his method of saying one thing and doing another, which is typical.

Then in the very next election, in 2007, he never said anything about the HST; it was never discussed. What did he do? He brought in the largest single tax increase ever in history. And they’ve still run out of money. They’ve still run out of money.

The budget in 2003 was \$70 billion; it’s now \$125 billion. The debt was \$136 billion; it’s now \$259 billion. They’ve doubled the debt. They’ve doubled spending, pretty well. And you ask yourself, at the end of the day, when you’re at the grocery store, paying your bills on hydro or for gasoline for your car, are you any better off?

The answer unanimously is “No.”

Interjections: Yes.

Mr. John O’Toole: The Liberal members here are saying “Yes.” I say that in their two-minute rebuttal they should get up and say what things are better. I know children with autism who aren’t getting treatment. I know children who can’t get therapy.

Look, there’s no perfect world, but don’t present it as if it is perfect—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

HOSPITAL SERVICES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Leeds–Grenville has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Health. The member from Leeds–Grenville will have up to five minutes, and the minister or the parliamentary assistant will have up to five minutes.

Mr. Steve Clark: I’m happy to have the opportunity to once again discuss the important issue of the surgical services at the Brockville General Hospital.

I think it’s important to look at what the CEO of the South East LHIN said in a newspaper article after I asked the question of the Minister of Health. According to the report, Paul Huras, the CEO, denied there is any plan to remove surgery from the Brockville General Hospital. He said, “Not only is it not a plan, it’s not even being considered by the LHIN or the team that’s working on them.”

That’s great, and I think that based on those comments it should be pretty easy: I can sit down, the parliamentary assistant can stand up, tell me that this report is not going to be acted on, and we’ll all be good. I hope that happens, but we’ll wait and see.

I hope what the parliamentary assistant won’t do is give a response on how wonderfully the government thinks the LHINs are operating, because that’s not the debate that we’re having today.

I think what we want to hear are some words clarifying Mr. Huras, the CEO of the South East LHIN. He said this option to remove the surgical unit at BGH is “not even being considered.” So what I’m looking for is a reassurance for my residents in the riding of Leeds–Grenville that this is going to be removed from the discussion. In fact, I’m really surprised that it still remains on the table after that same report quoted the LHIN CEO as saying that viable hospitals include surgical and support services.

Again, if the LHIN is truly committed in having, in its words, “seven hospitals today, seven hospitals tomorrow, and viable hospitals”—when I hear that, I have to ask the question: Why are we having this debate today? Well, we’re having the debate because the minister didn’t answer the question and defended the LHIN; that’s why we’re here.

So I’m very troubled that a week after I brought this up, and hearing the reassuring words from the health minister and the South East LHIN, no one—and I mean no one—has stood up on that side of the House to tell me that this supposedly ridiculous scenario is out of the picture. That’s what I’m hoping the parliamentary assistant will do; if not, I’m afraid it just feeds the fears and mistrust that I and so many others in Leeds–Grenville have about the South East LHIN and their clinical services roadmap. I think that they have reason to be concerned.

Last week, Mr. Huras was quoted as saying he was surprised that the consultant’s report I quoted from, which said that the elimination of the Brockville General Hospital surgery was part of an “ideal” system design, wasn’t posted online. I need to tell the members opposite that I checked today, and it’s still not online.

But do you know what is online? There’s a survey asking folks what the ideal scenario would be and asking for some of their thoughts on health care services. How can you get feedback from people without all of the information being available to them?

It gets worse. I checked; they’re a quarter of the way through the consultation process and yet, again, they haven’t had full disclosure. They haven’t even had a public meeting in my riding.

As you can imagine, I've had lots of feedback—a lot of it has been very positive—on the issues I spoke up about last week. The overwhelming majority keep telling me to speak up, but I have to admit I had some people who said I was a bit over the top last week and was a bit too angry in my reaction. It's true, I was angry; I was very angry. But when I have doctors coming to me saying that they're worried, then I get worried too. That's exactly what happened prior to me coming here last week.

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That's not the only person that has talked to me about this. I got an email from a lady almost minutes after question period named Sue Salzer, a resident of Fort Erie. She began her email this way: "I sit here with tears in my eyes. My sorrow is for you and the uphill battle you are entering to preserve your hospital services for Brockville." She and the residents of Fort Erie were very concerned and they fought the fight. In fact, their member opposite has supported them. But still, even with that fight, they've lost their hospital emergency department, two operating rooms and 40 medical beds.

So I'm not yelling today; I'm asking: If I was so wrong and this scenario is so ridiculous, all you have to do is stand up and say it's off the table. Say that closing the surgical department at the Brockville General Hospital is not going to happen and I'll be happy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the member for Ottawa—Orléans.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to respond to the member. The McGuinty government is dedicated to ensuring high-quality health care for all Ontarians. We have increased funding for Ontario hospitals every year since 2003, even in this tough economy. I think that says a lot about this government's commitment to health care. Hospital funding in Ontario has increased from \$10.9 billion in 2003-04 to \$16.3 billion in 2010-11, nearly a 50% increase. In 2011-12, the hospital sector will see an approximate 4.5% increase in overall funding.

The elimination of the surgical department at Brockville General was proposed within the mentioned consultant's report as an option for clinical services realignment within the South East. This option was presented to provide contrast to additional options being considered for clinical services realignment. The South East LHIN is undergoing extensive stakeholder and community engagement to evaluate all proposed options for clinical service realignment. Community engagement is currently under way for an eight-week period to inform this project. Any members of the public or stakeholders within the South East can provide input to proposed options, such as any changes that would impact Brockville General, by visiting the South East LHIN's website.

The clinical services roadmap is a partnership between the South East Local Health Integration Network, the seven hospitals across the southeast of Ontario—Brockville General Hospital; Hotel Dieu Hospital; Kingston General Hospital; Lennox and Addington County Gen-

eral Hospital, Napanee; Perth and Smiths Falls District Hospital; Providence Healthcare; Quinte Health Care, Belleville, Bancroft, Picton and Trenton—and the South East Community Care Access Centre. The existing hospital system was built on a model that is decades old and that doesn't reflect the economic realities the area faces today. With hospital operating costs growing at twice the rate of inflation, the days of huge hospital funding increases are gone; governments simply don't have enough money.

The goal of this process is to create a regional hospital clinical service plan that spans the entire range of health care experiences, including emergency care, in-patient care and rehabilitation. The result will be a high-quality, accessible and financially responsible health care system in the region.

Our investments at the Brockville General Hospital include a more than \$7.4-million increase in base funding from 2003-04 to 2010-11, nearly a 19% increase.

Wait time strategies: Since 2004, Brockville General Hospital received \$5,789,788 to provide 4,368 additional procedures, reducing wait times in the community. As a result, wait times for orthopaedic surgery at BGH have decreased by 105 days, or 61%. Wait times for hip replacement surgery at BGH have decreased by 538 days, or 87%. BGH has the fifth-shortest wait times in the province for this procedure. Wait times for knee replacement surgery at BGH have decreased by 300 days, or 82%. BGH has the sixth-shortest wait times in the province for this procedure. Wait times for CT scans have decreased by 37 days, or 76%. BGH is currently tied with South Bruce Grey Health Centre for the shortest wait times in the province for this procedure, at 12 days.

In January 2006, the hospital received a \$4.5-million planning and design grant to support planning for capital development on the Brockville General Hospital site to accommodate complex continuing care, rehabilitation and acute mental care beds and services being transferred from the Garden Street site—the former St. Vincent de Paul site of the Providence centre—and from the Brockville Psychiatric Hospital—BPH—site to the Royal Ottawa Health Care Group—ROHCG.

The project obtained the government's approval to plan to functional program stage in the 2009-10 health infrastructure plan.

The ministry continues to work with BGH to support its redevelopment project.

The government is investing over \$27 million in the South East LHIN through the aging-at-home strategy to support seniors at home.

The South East LHIN received \$1,135,105 for initiatives that will improve ER performance and reduce the number of ALC patients in hospitals.

The South East LHIN received funding for three ER physician assistants to perform a range of duties which will free up ER doctors, allowing them to see more patients.

The South East LHIN received \$250,000 for a nurse-led long-term-care outreach team.

The opposition do not get it. They want to cut \$3 billion out of health care but at the same time ask for increased services. Which is it?

They don't have a plan. It's clear that Tim Hudak and the PCs want to go back to the days of cutting health care, firing nurses and closing hospitals—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Beaches–East York has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given recently by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

The member for Beaches–East York will have up to five minutes, and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care will have up to five minutes.

Mr. Michael Prue: On February 24, I asked the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to help my constituent, Michelle Fernandes. Michelle's back here again tonight looking for an answer.

Curative surgery exists for Michelle in the United States only. No physician in Ontario could be located who could skilfully perform the surgery she so badly needed. Despite these facts, OHIP has continually denied her prior approval applications for insured out-of-country health services.

I asked the minister questions on the last occasion, which was the second time I was here. The minister was unsure if she had ever met with Michelle, but after Michelle had the temerity, the unmitigated gall, to wave to the minister to make sure the minister understood and then was admonished by the Speaker, she conceded, yes, that in fact she had met with Michelle Fernandes.

The second part of my question—and this is crucial—was that the minister was instituting changes to the regulation that would make it virtually impossible to receive out-of-country funding. I went on to describe to the minister the new regulation, which the minister seemed quite unsure of, which would allow Ontario surgeons to perform any surgery within their scope of practice, even if they had never, ever done it before. The minister seemed concerned and promised to look into that.

I have to tell you that we have had some correspondence with ministerial officials, particularly Mr. James Berry, over the course of the last week. He has written to my office and he has stated that the Health Services Appeal and Review Board, HSARB, appeals that were received prior to April 1 will be under the old regulations. All well and good: We're happy to hear that because Michelle's first 12 operations out of country may be appealable. However, she's going to have to have at least another one, maybe more, and they will not be appealable, and that's the reality of what this ministry is trying to do.

Secondly, we wrote back to him and asked him to clarify, and he wrote back to us saying, "The regulatory amendment regarding the term 'identical or equivalent

service,' which becomes effective April 1, 2011, clarifies that an identical or equivalent service is performed in Ontario if there is a physician in Ontario who has provided written confirmation" that they can do it. Whether they've done it before or not is entirely irrelevant.

We've written back to him again and have not had an answer to date. We have three unanswered questions of him. "First, we are still unsure as to why Michelle's appeals have been delayed and delayed." She has been appealing now for more than five years. For five years this government has put roadblocks in her way, trying to appeal to get the money to pay the \$300,000 plus she's had to pay out of her own pocket for out-of-country services which were not available here.

1810

"Secondly," we asked, "will OHIP be 'retaining' a physician to provide written confirmation that he or she is available to provide the service that is the subject of an application and the service is within the physician's scope of practice?" We've not had an answer to that.

"Third, will the consulting position name the surgeons who are capable of performing these procedures and where they are located in Canada?" Because it's all well and good for the ministry to say that somebody can do this here; Michelle has more than 70 letters from physicians, acknowledged people in their field here in Ontario, who have said, "We cannot do this," and who have told her that the only person is a Dr. Dellon in Baltimore.

Why is the ministry doing this to Michelle Fernandes? That's what we want to know, and we still don't have the answers. Thankfully and mercifully, tonight there was a tourism event downstairs. I invited Michelle to go downstairs. I invited her to come down and have a glass of wine while we waited for 6 o'clock. The Premier walked in. Michelle—lots of chutzpah—walked up to the Premier and told him about the case. Even though he had signed letters saying that there was nothing he could do and referred it to the minister, he seemed to be genuinely concerned about what is happening here to an Ontario citizen in a province that should be able to look after her. He has promised personally to look into this. I'm hoping that the parliamentary assistant can give the same kind of assurance that the Premier did just 15 minutes ago.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to speak to this. The Ontario health insurance plan is a universal, publicly funded system available to all qualified Ontario residents. The McGuinty government is committed to single-tier universal comprehensive medicare for medically necessary physician, hospital and dental-surgical services under the principles of the Canada Health Act.

Through the out-of-country prior approval program, the ministry provides full funding of out-of-country health services for Ontario residents who require services to address medical conditions that arise inside Ontario when these services are not performed in Ontario or cannot be obtained in Ontario without medically significant delay.

The out-of-country prior approval program functions as a safety valve in Ontario's health system and as a strategic indicator of capacity pressures.

The out-of-country program functions not only as an overflow mechanism for Ontario's health services but also as a strategic indicator of fluctuations in capacity that take place in Ontario both in health service availability and the evolution of health care worldwide.

The out-of-country prior approval program does not provide funding for expenses related to transportation; lodging apart from the approved in-patient hospitalization; food apart from meals provided as part of the approved in-patient hospitalization; drugs apart from drugs that are a part of the approved treatment and that are administered in the out-of-country hospital or health facility; or other services that are not specifically prior-approved except emergency services directly related to the prior-approved treatment.

Applications for prior approval of funding for out-of-country health services are completed by practising Ontario physicians and submitted to the ministry's out-of-country unit for adjudication.

Ministry medical advisers and senior staff in the out-of-country unit review prior-approval applications and make decisions about funding based on the terms and conditions specified in the regulations, principally regulation 552 under the Health Insurance Act. These conditions include: the treatment is not experimental; the treatment is generally accepted in Ontario as appropriate for a person in the same medical circumstances as the insured person; the treatment is to be provided in a hospital or licensed health facility; and either the treatment or an equivalent treatment is not performed in Ontario, or the treatment or an equivalent treatment is performed in Ontario but it is necessary that the insured person travel outside of Canada to avoid a delay that would result in death or medically significant irreversible tissue damage.

In addition, the funding is conditional on written approval from the general manager before the services are obtained. The treatment must be obtained within the period specified in the written approval from the general manager.

With the exception of services provided in urgent circumstances to address complications arising from an approved treatment, the ministry cannot pay for services that are not specified in the letter of approval that is sent to the out-of-country facility and copied to the referring Ontario physician and the patient.

As of April 1, 2009, an out-of-country preferred provider should be selected if a preferred provider arrangement has been established for the required service. If not a preferred provider, funding will not be available.

Preferred providers are listed on the out-of-country website. To date, funding agreements have been established for diagnostic imaging, residential treatment, certain types of cancer care, and bariatric surgery.

Health Services Appeal and Review Board: The ministry adjudicates each out-of-country application for funding in accordance with the Health Insurance Act and regulations, including section 28.4 of Ontario regulation 552. The ministry applies the HIA and the regulatory

provision to the specific facts of each case, most specifically to the information submitted by the applicant that describes the medical circumstances of the applicant.

Individuals can appeal to the Health Services Appeal and Review Board if they do not agree with the adjudication from the ministry. The ministry does not interfere with the decision-making processes of the board. The Health Services Appeal and Review Board is an independent adjudicative board. It is not part of OHIP or any other part of the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. The board can change OHIP's decision if it is satisfied that OHIP made a mistake in interpreting the Health Insurance Act in your case. The board cannot change or ignore the act and cannot take into account compassionate reasons or any other reasons that are not in the act.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is proposing regulatory amendments to implement evidence-based changes that will result in improvements in quality of care and patient outcomes, as well as system efficiencies. The proposed changes include: adjustment of the Ontario health insurance plan; payments for physician services; and changes to the funding of the out-of-country health services by OHIP.

These evidence- and quality-based recommendations are consistent with the ministry's Excellent Care for All strategy by using technical, expert evidence in decision making for the funding of health care services. Without affecting patient care for medically necessary services, these recommendations will ensure proper testing and services to those patients who need the services.

The proposed amendments will help the government control expenditures while at the same time protecting the delivery of health care services. In addition, these amendments will focus on the key priority of ensuring the appropriateness of care through the provision of evidence-based services.

The proposed changes would be effective April 1, 2011, with the exception of the proposal related to out-of-country drug funding, which would be effective October 1, 2011. Any applications delivered to the OHIP general manager prior to April 1, 2011, will be reviewed in accordance with the previous regulations. For any new applications delivered after April 1, the new regulations will be applied.

SOCIAL SERVICES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given recently by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The member will have up to five minutes; the parliamentary assistant will have up to five minutes to reply.

Mr. Paul Miller: On Thursday, March 31, I asked a question about the Eramosa karst feeder lands. I asked, "Will the Premier, right now, commit to the city of Hamilton to close those serious loopholes that leave this land open to future development?"

In his response, the Minister of Municipal Affairs said he had never heard from me on this issue. I can only guess that he doesn't listen to questions, statements or comments in this Legislature unless his name is specifically mentioned; if he did, he would have long since realized that I first raised concerns about the Eramosa karst feeder lands in this Legislature on April 16, 2008, and have raised the same issue 11 times, including my question last week on March 31.

In a blatant show of partisanship, the minister drooled platitudes for his Liberal colleague, who has been nowhere publicly on this issue until recent weeks in this election year. Such misleading commentary in this Legislature stains the reputation and degrades the integrity of our political process—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'd like the member to withdraw that, please.

Mr. Paul Miller: I withdraw that last statement, Speaker.

In my supplementary question, I asked to be assured that "the minister actually responsible for the lands transfer them immediately to the Hamilton Conservation Authority, no strings attached."

As I understood it, these lands are currently within the portfolio of the Minister of Infrastructure, who has responsibility for the Ontario Realty Corp., within which these lands are held, which is why I framed my question exactly as I did: to ensure the correct minister would respond to my question. Is this minister the correct

minister? And if he is, when were the lands transferred from the Ontario Realty Corp. to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, you need to clarify something. The objection that you filed was with regard to funding rebates for several services to the city of Hamilton, and you said the minister did not answer the question properly.

Mr. Paul Miller: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to you, that's incorrect.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): It's your handwriting.

Mr. Paul Miller: Someone must have made a mistake, because it was about the Eramosa karst.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I don't know that the parliamentary assistant is prepared to answer that question this evening. I have a document signed by yourself that doesn't mention that, so I can only go by the document that's in front of me, and I'm going to have to adjourn the House.

Mr. Paul Miller: Okay, Speaker, I'll—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We'll get it clarified somehow, yes.

There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House is adjourned until 9 of the clock Thursday morning, April 7.

The House adjourned at 1820.

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Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
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Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
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Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
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Frank Klees, Gerry Phillips
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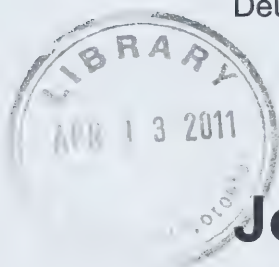
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 39^e législature



**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 7 April 2011

Jeudi 7 avril 2011

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 7 April 2011

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 7 avril 2011

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BETTER TOMORROW FOR ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR DES LENDEMAINS MEILLEURS POUR L'ONTARIO (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 6, 2011, on the motion for second reading of Bill 173, An Act respecting 2011 Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters / Projet de loi 173, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires de 2011, l'affectation anticipée de crédits et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Questions and comments? The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm doing the reply.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pardon me.

The member from London—Fanshawe.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I listened to the member from Durham yesterday speaking about many different issues, especially about the budget matter. I know he's not happy about many different things, but as a matter of fact, this budget was an incredible budget. It tackled many different issues in our lives: education, health care, infrastructure, farming.

It's very important for all of us in the province of Ontario to strengthen our ability as a community for education, for health care and for infrastructure, to build the future for the people of Ontario, to build the communities, to build schools, to invest in our education system, to increase the capacity in colleges in order to host many different, talented students in the province of Ontario, and also to expand our health care, to open more hospitals and provide services for nurses, and through screening for many, many people facing cancer, breast cancer—potential cancer patients.

All these elements were in the budget, and I hope the member opposite, when he decides to vote, votes in support. This budget is important to all of us to maintain our ability, to maintain our prosperity and to build a good

future for the province of Ontario, to build a solid future by supporting all the elements, not just the cities but also the farming communities.

I know that the member from Oxford was happy for the component of support for the farmers. Hopefully, he'll stand up and support this budget, because it will mean a lot to his people in his riding. I had the chance to work in his riding for many years. I know how happy the people of Oxford would be if the member from Oxford stood up and supported the budget, because it supports this community; it supports the farming community. I know he's in touch with the farming community a lot.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Despite what the government says is there, I would say to you that the feedback I've had from the people in my riding of Kitchener—Waterloo is that this budget did not address the issues that were important to them. And I would say for them, at the current time, that they're simply trying to catch up.

This government has hit them hard. Since 2003, they have introduced a health tax, even though the Premier indicated he wasn't going to raise taxes. And so again, there wasn't honesty on the part of the government. Since that time, we've seen the introduction of the HST, which, again, has created tremendous hardship for people in the province of Ontario. They're now being forced to pay the HST, particularly on the energy costs and on gas and on many, many other aspects of their life, and it's causing extreme hardship. In fact, I know they're looking for relief, and this budget just pretended people were not suffering.

Also, you didn't really deal up front about what you tried to do, and that was the introduction of the eco tax. So when people take a look at your budget, they see that you're not able to address the deficit. In fact, we know now that missing from your numbers was any money that was going to be required for capital for the rollout of full-day kindergarten. In fact, that's in the newspaper today.

How much else is not in your budget? How much additional spending is there going to be? How much is that deficit going to increase? How much is the debt going to increase, and who's going to pay for it? You have no plan. You only have a reckless spending plan and to tax—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's my pleasure to respond to the member for Durham and his words yesterday, and

also to address the words that were just spoken by the member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

To set the record straight and to let the people of Ontario know how the people of Waterloo region are feeling, I have a quote, a comment here from the Waterloo Region Record. As reported in the Record, John Colanageli is the CEO and the director of Lutherwood. Lutherwood does great things for children in the community, certainly children's mental health. He is a community activist. He works very hard to stand up and support the people of Waterloo region. This is a not-for-profit health and social service organization.

John Colanageli had this to say in the Waterloo Record: "It's pretty rare that you see children's mental health in a provincial budget. It's wonderful news." So the people of Waterloo region are, in fact, saying this is wonderful news.

This budget not only addresses mental health for children and youth; it also looks at health care. Supporting more than 90,000 breast screening exams for women is actually monumental. It means so much for women aged 30 to 49 who are at high risk. We know that one in nine women in Canada will face breast cancer in their lifetime, so this is something that speaks directly to them and supports them in their lives.

In terms of education, over 60,000 additional post-secondary spaces are going to be made available, and of course in my riding, Kitchener–Conestoga—the three townships of Wilmot, Woolwich and Wellesley—the farmers are happy. The risk management program, extended for grain and oilseed and now for sheep, hog and cattle, is a very good thing and the farmers are happy in Waterloo region.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: First of all, I want to commend our critic for the Ministry of Finance for his presentation and explaining what is not in the budget.

What is in the budget is bad news for the majority of citizens. What is not in the budget is what we have to worry about even more, which is that the budget is written in such a way that it's a recipe for taxation. That will be done after the money has been spent.

0910

I want to speak quickly to the comments from the member from London–Fanshawe. He talked about the risk management program and that the farmers in Oxford county and the rest of Ontario are pleased with that. I would agree with him that farmers are pleased with that, but I would point out to the member that that's not in this budget bill. There is nothing in this budget bill about risk management at all.

One of the things that is in schedule 1 is that subsection 25 of the agricultural and horticultural act is being changed. The act "currently deems a local organization committee that hosts the annual International Plowing Match to be an agricultural society for the purposes of a tax exemption under the Retail Sales Tax Act. The tax is no longer applicable and, consequently, subsection

25(4) of the act is repealed." That sounds kind of benign, except that up until now, admittance to the International Plowing Match was tax exempt. They're taking the tax exemption away and applying 13% tax to the admission into International Plowing Match. I'm not sure why the members opposite didn't mention that they have tax increases in this budget that, in fact, are going to hurt agriculture.

They don't speak about the business risk management program in this bill at all. The reason that they don't speak to business risk management is because the minister could have implemented that any time in the past four years without the budget and without the fanfare that they made out of it. They just decided that this was a great time to announce it, and then hopefully she will proceed to implement it, but we're not so sure that's going to happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Durham has two minutes for his response.

Mr. John O'Toole: I first want to pay some respect to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka and, of course, the member from York–Simcoe, who spoke yesterday and, I believe, outlined some of the gaping holes in the promises and the expectations in this budget. In fact, if I could be more specific, they clearly said, first, that there's no respect for the taxpayer in this bill or our youth in the future. There's growing debt, growing liabilities.

The second thing: They saw through this clearly, and the people viewing today or yesterday would know that this is an election budget. They're not telling the whole story, and the member from Kitchener–Waterloo just said it. She met with the education community yesterday. The money simply isn't there for the programming.

The member for Haldimand—our critic for agriculture, Mr. Hardeman, said this morning, just now, that the risk management plan is another gaping hole.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: I just know him as the Minister of Agriculture because that's what he always was, and that's what he should be. You don't call ministers "the member from Oxford"—and most of southwestern Ontario.

The point I want to make is, there are several troubling schedules. I think one of them is schedule 15. It's something that you should be very, very concerned about. Schedule 15: Take a close look at it. It's an exemption for disclosures in health care. I looked at Ron Sapsford's salary that was discussed here—\$765,000. What's the minister saying? Nothing. That's almost a million dollars. Imagine how many children with autism could be helped with that, how many emergency procedures in hospitals could be done with that, how many long-term-care beds that would provide.

The fact is, they're spending the money so recklessly and so carelessly, with so little respect for the taxpayer, it's no wonder that our leader, Tim Hudak, has urged us to speak loud and long and vote against this budget: because it's a disguise.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my privilege today to address this budget bill. As you're well aware, Speaker, the budget that is brought down by a Minister of Finance, by a government, expresses its priorities, says what's important to it and tells us what its strategy is for the province, whether that is a strategy to build the economy, a strategy to address social services or both together. The budget is a fairly critical document.

I'm going to talk about three fairly large pieces in this document that I think reflect the strategy of the government, and then there are a number of items that I want to address in somewhat more detail.

But before I do any of that, I want to note that in this budget, in an election year, there is no mention of climate change or action on climate change. At this point in 2007, the Premier was coming out and saying that action on climate change was the moral challenge for our generation. The moral challenge for our generation seems to have disappeared from the government's priorities and books. Not in this budget, even though the last report that we got from this government on climate change made it very clear that the government was not going to be able to meet its targets, even implementing every program that they brought forward. We've heard virtually not a word from them since then.

Today we have a budget from Minister Dwight Duncan, whose strategy for dealing with Ontario's economic problems can be summarized as tax cuts, the building up of public-private partnerships and the cutting of public services. That is not a strategy for this century. That strategy is one that we've seen implemented in other jurisdictions. We've seen it implemented in part in Canada before.

The reality is that that is not a strategy that will build up your economic base. That is not a strategy that will deal with your social problems. That is not a strategy that will rebuild the infrastructure and the well-being of the people of Ontario. That is a strategy that, more and more, Americanizes our society. When I say "Americanize," because there are many aspects to American culture and society, I mean one that will increase inequality, have the market further dominate the relations between people in society, and a society in which there will be more conflict and more tension.

I want to go first to the whole question of corporate tax cuts. As I had an opportunity to say earlier this week, I was able to see the Minister of Finance make his presentation to the Economic Club of Canada last week—a well-done presentation; can't argue with that. But over and over and over again, the point that was made by the minister was the centrality of corporate tax cuts to his economic development strategy, without a doubt, saying that without corporate tax cuts there would not be investment, there wouldn't be jobs and we wouldn't have the kind of development and manufacturing economic infrastructure that we need here in Ontario.

So it was with some real interest that I saw the article in the *Globe and Mail* yesterday, front page, byline Karen Howlett. The headline was, "Corporate Tax Cuts Don't

Spur Growth; Designed as Economic Stimulators and Job Creators, They're Going to Cash Reserves Instead, Analysis Shows. That's an analysis that in fact we've seen from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. We've seen it from trade unions. We've seen it from a variety of academics.

But it is not common for that to show up on the front page of the *Globe and Mail*—quite an analysis to put forward. Frankly, when you look at what they had to say, in many ways, they had gone to the data that had been presented by the academics, verified it for themselves and presented that case to the Canadian people. The case they've made to the Canadian people is one that can be made to the people of Ontario specifically as well.

I'm going to quote some of what they had to say. They write, "Canadian companies have added tens of billions of dollars to their stockpiles of cash at a time when tax cuts are supposed to be encouraging them to plow more money into their businesses."

So as we ignore the child care sector, as we see more and more child care centres facing rising fees and disruption because they don't have the money to make capital investments, as those child carers struggle with the introduction of all-day kindergarten—a good thing but one which is being implemented in a way that undermines the child care sector outside of schools—we are engaged in giving away billions of dollars to major corporations that are not creating jobs with that money. They're socking the money away.

0920

You have to ask yourself, why is it that the people of Ontario are making these sacrifices? Why are they going without in their daily lives? Why are they sitting for hours in traffic because the transit that's needed to move people along isn't being built? Why are they dealing with long periods in emergency rooms? Why can't they get child care? Why can't they get daycare for their elderly parents, many of whom are struggling with dementia? Why are those pressing social needs being set aside just so some of the richest corporations in Canada can sock away more money and pay bigger bonuses to their CEOs? You really have to ask yourself that, because this government, this McGuinty government, has decided that it is good public policy to make wealthy corporations even wealthier and to starve the public sector, starve the people of this province of the services they need to get on with their lives.

The *Globe* mentions that corporate tax cuts are becoming a major issue in the federal election, and they're quite right. It's entirely reasonable that they should become a major issue because, in fact, it isn't just Ontario that has engaged in this policy that leads nowhere; the Harper government is deeply committed to a policy that leads nowhere with corporate tax cuts, just as the federal Liberals, who, under Paul Martin, introduced the biggest corporate tax cuts in Canadian history—so they claim—are currently, for entirely opportunistic reasons, saying, "That's where we get the money for the social programs that we promised when we were in government and we

never delivered on. Now, okay, we can see a source of cash." You can assign the credibility to those comments that you want to.

But I want to say that if you look at the reality in Canada, those corporate tax cuts have not led to investments in machinery and equipment that would make Ontario workers more productive. They have not led to investment in factories, in workplaces that would give them more work. They have not led to an increase in wages. They have led to enrichment—enrichment not of the population as a whole, but enrichment of those at the very top.

The *Globe and Mail* writes here: "Successive federal governments have chosen the latter path"—that's the path of additional corporate tax cuts—"in recent years in a bid to make Canada more competitive and attractive to international investors. In 2000, the combined federal-provincial tax rate was just over 42%, ranking Canada near the top among industrialized nations. The combined rate has since fallen to 28%, placing the country in the middle of the pack, and Conservative leader Stephen Harper's goal is to reduce it to 25% by fiscal 2013."

They go on to write: "Businesses were widely expected to use the extra money from successive rounds of tax cuts to build factories and offices and buy new machinery and equipment. At one time, they did just that. From 1960 until the early 1990s, corporations invested almost every penny of their after-tax cash flow back into the business."

But that was then and this is a very different now. The *Globe and Mail* goes on: "But the tax cuts appear to have reversed decades of tradition. Investment in equipment and machinery has fallen to 5.5% in 2010 as a share of Canada's total economic output from 6.8% in 2005 and 7.7% in 2000, the *Globe* analysis shows."

From the time that Paul Martin gave the biggest corporate tax cut in Canadian history, investment in Canada by corporations getting those tax cuts has dropped dramatically. This government, following Paul Martin, following Stephen Harper, has decided that even more tax cuts is the answer, is the way forward, when in fact even the recent history of the last decade makes it very clear that that is not going to give us jobs; it's not going to give us investment; it is going to give us eye-popping bonuses for CEOs and extraordinary amounts of cash in those corporations.

The *Globe* says, "The McGuinty government doled out \$4 billion in tax breaks over three years to businesses in its 2009 budget as part of a package of reforms to help kick-start an economy hit hard by the global economic recession."

"Ontario represents just under 40 percent of the national economy, so its cuts went a long way toward lowering the overall Canadian rate, Mr. Duncan said."

Our party leader, Andrea Horwath, countered by saying, "The focus ... should be on making life easier for families, not harder."

She rejects those corporate tax cuts. The NDP rejects those corporate tax cuts. This is a pathway that leads to a

society with unrepaired bridges and health care that is not sustained by public funds, a place where schools crumble and students—young people—are paying tuition that is a huge burden on their lives. That is the effect of this decision. It does not give us the kind of life that we expect or that we deserve. The McGuinty decision to follow Stephen Harper's options is one that everyone in this province should reject.

Now, I want to note as well that Erin Weir, a prominent economist, has written about this whole issue of corporate tax cuts in Ontario. He notes on April 6: "The latest Statistics Canada figures indicate that private non-financial corporations have stockpiled \$456 billion of straight cash (Canadian dollars plus foreign currency). That total does not include cash stockpiled by banks and crown corporations or near-cash items like short-time paper."

Corporate tax cuts that lead to half-trillion-dollar cash balances in the hands of corporate Canada are not building our economy. They are leading to increasing division in this society: extraordinary wealth at one end, growing poverty at the other and stagnation for the middle class at the centre. Middle-income people ask, "Why is it that we can't get ahead? Why is it that we are hard-pressed? Why is it that we can't afford to send our kids to university or to college?"

They wonder why, with two people working, they can't cover their bills. Well, when huge volumes of cash are taken out of society, when social services are reduced, when social supports are undermined, it's no surprise that middle-income families find they are struggling just to stay in place and low-income families find that they're falling behind. That's the reality.

There have been arguments made that perhaps corporate tax cuts do a good thing. We've seen, in some areas, purchases of equipment. The reality is that if you have a higher Canadian dollar and you can buy some things more cheaply, you will. The corporate tax cuts lead to cash in hand, not jobs for people in this province.

I want to note that Mr. Weir also gives his incoherence award to Dwight Duncan. He says, "In an interview on Tuesday, [Ontario] Finance Minister Dwight Duncan said he supports Mr. Ignatieff's policy" of opposing corporate tax cuts "even though he himself is under siege by opposition members for presiding over corporate tax cuts."

This is pretzel contortion time. It is an impressive feat to put forward a policy wholeheartedly at the centre of your budget at this level and to say at the federal level, "No, no, the policy doesn't work."

He goes on, "The feds could have actually taken their foot off the gas pedal in terms of corporate tax cuts because of what we've done," Mr. Duncan said."

This is fascinating to me and to Erin Weir. He says, "So, the purpose of provincial corporate tax cuts is to reduce the need for federal corporate tax cuts?" There is no logic in that. There is no logic. In fact, there is a huge lack of principle.

0930

This budget is a mimic of the neoconservative agenda that we have seen in so many places, and this budget is

one that is not going to deliver the jobs or the services or the economic future that the people of Ontario deserve and hope for. This budget is continuing to pave the foundation for the decline of Ontario as a major economic power.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives just recently released a study, authored by David Macdonald, actually looking at the impact of tax cuts on companies: What happened when they got that cash? He was looking at the argument that corporate tax cuts create jobs—a big argument made by the Conservatives in this election. That whole assertion has come under increasing scrutiny, taken from various angles.

CCPA focused specifically on job creation. They looked at “Canada’s biggest public companies, those on the S&P/TSX composite and tracked them over the past decade to see how their taxes and profits changed.” He writes, “At the same time, I also tracked how many employees they had and therefore the number of jobs they created. These are the companies that benefit the most from corporate tax cuts because they declare the largest profits.

“There were 198 companies that had data from 2000 through 2009.” He writes further, “What readers should find shocking is just how dramatic the transformation in corporate taxation has been in the past decade. The effective tax rate that these successful companies have paid has been cut in half. Imagine if, as an individual, your personal income taxes had been cut in half over the past decade; well, that’s what happened in corporate Canada.

“With such a dramatic change, it should be no surprise that compared to 2000, profits are up 50% while taxes paid are down 20%. The tab for corporate tax cuts for just these 200 companies is \$12 billion a year in lost provincial and federal revenues. To give readers a sense of scale,” he writes, “that much money could buy us a national \$10/day child care program and wipe out poverty among seniors, with money left over.”

We are talking about a vast transfer of wealth that the McGuinty government is not simply abetting; it is putting forward that transfer of wealth; it is undermining the basis for existing social programs; it is undermining the basis for those services that the people of this province need. Child care, health care, education, the ability to get to work on transit that you can afford—all of those things are undermined by this strategy.

Mr. Macdonald goes on to say, “The bargain that Canada made with its most profitable corporations was that if we give them dramatic tax cuts, they’ll use that money to create jobs. We’ve cut the cheque, worth \$12 billion a year in 2009, so did we get the jobs?” Apparently not. He writes, “The Canadian economy as a whole has increased the number of jobs by 6% since 2005. However, the 200 companies that are receiving the \$12-billion-a-year tax break have only increased their job numbers by 5%; in effect they are pulling down the average.”

You would think, with \$12 billion a year, as the most outstanding recipient, the recipient who gets the most

from these policies, that you’d be able to pull ahead of the average, that you would be creating more jobs—at least, that’s the mythology that’s promoted in this chamber by the McGuinty government. But in fact, that’s not what the numbers show. That is not the reality in this province. That is not the reality in this country. Why this government is following a discredited policy is a question only they can answer. All I can say is that if you look at the numbers and the real historic experience, this is an investment that undermines our economy, undermines our society and undermines our families and leaves some people, some companies, extraordinarily rich.

I’ve heard the argument that we need to have lower tax rates so that we’re competitive with other jurisdictions. I just want to note that in Canada, without these changes that have been coming forward, Ontario is already equal to or lower than almost all provinces except for BC, Alberta and New Brunswick. These are not our major competitors for new manufacturing. There are competitors that are around the Great Lakes: Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania. On average, the combined tax rates for those jurisdictions is about 36%; Ontario’s down at 28.5%.

It’s one thing to be competitive. It’s one thing to be within the range of those who are near you. It’s another thing to undermine your financial base, your ability to educate and to provide health care and child care, your ability to provide a safe and secure society that comes from social spending. That’s one thing. It’s another to make our society one that will be far more uncertain in the future because, increasingly, wealth is concentrated in a small number of hands. The majority of people are finding themselves stressed, carrying a huge economic burden, all for an ideology of lower corporate tax rates that doesn’t deliver the goods.

There are a number of people who had comments on this budget. I’ll give you a few comments from stakeholders. In the labour sector, “three years of corporate tax cuts have bled the public coffers dry and manufactured a recession in the public service. The government’s plans to cut another 1,500 public sector jobs, on top of the 3,400 that were axed in the last budget, will deprive many—including the unemployed—of the services they rely on.” That’s OFL secretary-treasurer Marie Kelly.

Or, “How can the government identify children’s aid as a source of savings at a time when programs for abused and neglected children need a major infusion of cash just to keep afloat?”—Smokey Thomas, president of OPSEU.

I have a few other stakeholders’ comments as I go through, but I have to say, the reality is that this government has decided whose bank account they are going to magnify and whose they are going to pillage. For most of Ontario, most families and most working people aren’t the people whose bank accounts are going to grow. They’re the ones who will get pillaged.

The next piece I want to address is the proposed merger of Infrastructure Ontario, the Ontario Realty Corp.

and the Stadium Corp. This Bill 173 provides the enabling legislation for the merger of Infrastructure Ontario, the Ontario Realty Corp. and the Stadium Corp. I'll read out precisely what the budget says. "Building on Infrastructure Ontario's success: Building on IO's track record and success at delivering infrastructure projects on time and within budget, the province intends to expand the role and mandate of IO into new sectors and a broader range of projects. These changes will result in greater efficiencies and more savings for the province."

We in the NDP are very worried that a form of infrastructure financing that is considerably more expensive than the traditional public model will be expanded into energy and municipal projects and used at a far greater scale than in the past.

0940

Up until now, the government has been implementing a \$2.5-billion, five-year capital budget of projects structured as public-private partnerships, P3s. The majority of P3s have been large hospital projects, as well as justice projects, such as courthouses—one of which was cancelled in this budget, leading to further delays in adjudication of cases.

Under the Liberals, P3 deals are done under the direction of Infrastructure Ontario. This agency supports ministries, municipalities and the broader public sector in their transactions with private sector consortiums that finance, provide project management during the construction phase and almost always assume at least some ongoing property management and maintenance functions once the project is completed.

In some hospital P3s, these private consortiums assume responsibility for food preparation, cleaning, laundry and even payroll-related services, although, frankly, this varies with each project. A typical consortium consists of at least one major financial institution—a bank or a pension fund—construction companies and property management concerns. Traditional non-profit hospital boards run the core health functions of the P3 hospitals, but exactly where these core health functions end and functions such as cleaning and maintenance begin is open for negotiation.

The money for P3s is borrowed from the private sector financial institutions that are part of consortiums and is paid back over a 25- to 30-year period. The principal-plus-interest payments are funded out of the operating budgets of relevant ministries, for instance, hospitals or the Ministry of Health. The government admits that financing costs will be greater under the P3 approach because the projects will have to borrow at higher rates than the government. The actual interest rate spread between P3 rates and the government borrowing rate may not be great, but the extra interest and principal costs add up substantially over a 30-year period. That means that the public, the people of this province, pay more for those projects. More money comes out of their pockets when, in fact, as you well know, Speaker, there's not a lot left in there now. That approach is one that makes this province poorer.

The biggest extra costs associated with P3s are the risk premiums paid to the consortia in return for the consortia assuming various sorts of cost overrun risks. These risk premiums actually add more to the cost than the higher private sector borrowing cost.

I have to say that we had the opportunity recently to hear from a fellow named John Loxley. He came and made a presentation at the Legislature in one of the committee rooms. A number of MPPs were there. His book is entitled *Public Service, Private Profits: The Political Economy of Public/Private Partnerships in Canada*.

I've had the opportunity in estimates to question previous Ministers of Infrastructure about these public-private partnerships, and I have looked at the cost difference between the public-private partnership projects and a publicly financed project. There's always a big cost difference that's called "risk," because if you do 50 or 100 projects, after a while you get a sense of what kinds of overruns are common.

I've pointed out to previous Ministers of Infrastructure that that risk number is awfully big. It's very useful for saying that, in fact, a public-private partnership is a better deal, but where does that number come from? Who actually does that analysis? What Mr. Loxley had to say to us, and he's well respected for the work he's done in this sector, is that it was Andersen accounting that did that number that all these public-private partnerships are justified by.

For those who don't remember Andersen accounting, now no longer with us, they were the auditors for Enron. And if people remember Enron, with its extraordinary funny-money approach to financing energy deals, one knows there's all kinds of fun that can be had with numbers. Andersen accounting doing the estimates upon which hundreds of millions of dollars of public funds are allocated, Andersen accounting providing the backdrop to a policy that results in higher costs to the people of Ontario, gives me no comfort, should give you no comfort, Speaker, and should not give the government of Ontario any comfort. But, in fact, their analysis is used to justify public-private partnerships. That analysis should be thrown out the window.

Set aside risk for a moment. Let's look at the cost just coming from interest, an analysis of the Brampton P3, public-private partnership, hospital deal based on a spread of 6.73%, the actual Brampton project borrowing rate, versus 5.56%, the Ontario government bond rate at the time, over a 27-year period. For those who are watching at home who don't like hearing speeches with lots of numbers in them, my apologies, but it's important to get on the record exactly what the numbers are.

Based on borrowing \$536 million and a repayment period of 27 years, interest and principal payments would total \$175 million more under the P3 model than under a traditional public sector model—175 million bucks. That's of consequence: \$175 million gives you a fair amount. Just in comparison, the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, in its pre-budget submission, said that in order to stabilize the daycare system, what was needed

in this year's budget was \$100 million and in next year's budget, \$200 million. The amount of money that we have overpaid in one hospital is equivalent to one year of making sure that the daycare system in this province functions properly.

That's the scale of public money that is wasted. That is the scale of public money that is put into the pockets of very profitable companies when the people of Ontario go without in health care, education, child care and environmental protection.

Experts in the field of infrastructure finance have suggested that the interest rate spread between the actual public-private partnership borrowing rate and an Ontario government bond will be in the 0.5% to 1.25% range. On a \$500-million project paid off over close to 30 years, this is likely to mean anywhere between \$60 million and \$165 million in extra repayment costs by going the public-private partnership route, the P3 route. That's a 15% to 30% premium. That's a lot. These are substantial numbers.

You may ask, and sometimes, Speaker, I know you do ask, "Where is the money going? Why can't we provide these services? I have constituents who have problems that are not addressed by this government. Why can't they afford it? What kind of waste and inefficiency do we see coming from the McGuinty government?" Well, I can tell you right now: Look at how they deal with these projects, and be well aware that they're making sure that we are spending more than we need to spend.

Payments under the P3 schemes start on the completion of the project and, as indicated above, the cost of the project will hit the province's books over a 25- or 30-year period. Taking that approach of P3s that has been used in hospitals, that are costing Ontario dearly, and expanding that into the energy field, expanding that into the municipal field, dealing with a broader range of infrastructure projects, will undermine public finance and reduce the services that the people of this province can receive. This is one of the more disturbing pieces of the budget. Corporate tax cuts: wrong idea. Expansion of P3s: an expensive idea. It's not good for us, not good for Ontario.

0950

This government has also decided to look at not just having P3s for large infrastructure projects but also to look at a variety of alternative delivery mechanisms for public services. If you read the budget, you'll see that there are a variety of nice phrases about non-profits, government to government. But I've watched these processes before, and my expectation, and the expectation of people in this province, should be this: that, more than anything, this will be the basis for privatizing the delivery of public services—delivery that people in this province will pay for through both reduced services and increased costs. This government is continuing to add to the growth of inequality and the undermining of public services in Ontario.

The Ontario Public Service Employees Union wrote a letter to Premier McGuinty and Minister Duncan about

the commission on broader public sector reform, the vague title that this whole effort is covered under. Smokey Thomas, the head of OPSEU, wrote that he was very, very concerned about this commission, as was I. He's put together some good arguments here that I want you and the public to be aware of. There's no doubt in his mind that the commission is what he calls "a search-and-destroy mission" when it comes to public services. He writes:

"Your plan in the budget to wipe out 1,500 jobs in the Ontario public service in addition to the 3,400 job cuts previously announced means that entire programs will be eliminated. The Ontario public service is already" struggling. "It cannot deliver the programs it does now with fewer staff. Your government has been given that message by deputy ministers and other senior staff.

"The commission"—the Don Drummond commission—"will finish the job—not only for the Ontario public service but for the rest of the broader public sector. We will undoubtedly see recommendations calling for cuts to public programs and services, privatization on a large scale and new schemes to reduce wages and benefits for a downsized public sector workforce."

I want to say this to you: Most people don't see public services as distinct entities. As long as they're functioning—as long as the roads work, the hospitals are running, the schools are open, the universities are open; as long as someone is out there dealing with any oil spills or environmental problems—they're largely invisible to them. But underneath all of that, when you cut those services or when you privatize those services, failures start to become visible.

During the SARS epidemic, I had an opportunity to talk to a number of friends who, involved in the public health departments in this province, were struggling to deal with what was before them. They were stretched to the limit. If another crisis had occurred, they could not have dealt with that.

The reduction in services—one part—and the privatization of services, which I think will assist with the first, is not going to help people here in this province. Families want those services to be invisible. They don't want a public health crisis. They don't want headlines in those areas. What they want is their families protected and their health safeguarded. They want things to function in a way that doesn't cause drama in their everyday lives. But a program of privatization and cuts in the public sector, in the services that people depend on in their daily lives, is one that, unfortunately, really has the opportunity to introduce drama into their lives. They don't want that. We shouldn't want that. This government shouldn't want that, but in fact, their approach is going to deliver that.

OPSEU asks, "Why do we say that we'll see more privatization and a reduction of wages and benefits for a downsized public sector workforce?" He writes, "Because this is exactly the vision laid out in one of the business-funded reports quoted in the Ontario budget, *Shifting Gears: Paths to Fiscal Sustainability in Canada*.

"This report, written by University of Toronto faculty and 'supported' by accounting firm KPMG, envisions a

provincial government that solely sets policies and standards. The report advocates that other 'actors' deliver services and, alarmingly, ensure compliance with government standards."

The authors of that report cited in the government's budget, in the McGuinty budget, talk about it as an equity issue. They think that we should be underpaying public workers, just as private workers are underpaid.

That is not the goal. We in this Legislature should be fighting to make sure that people who work in the broader economy—farmers, small business people, people working in factories, people who work for the broader public service—have a higher standard of living in common. That's what we should be looking for. Attacking, undermining, downsizing, cutting public workers who deliver the health care, education and child care that families in this province depend on is not going to help the people of this province, not going to help our economy and not going to build for the future.

Don Drummond, TD Bank economist, was appointed chair of this commission—not a good sign. For the last year, Mr. Drummond has been putting out misinformation, trying to get public acceptance for increased privatization of our health care system.

"His predictions that health care would take up 80 cents of every program dollar gained widespread coverage"—I'm quoting Smokey Thomas here—"despite the fact that the trend line was actually going in the opposite direction. Health care has declined from 46 cents of the program dollar to 42 cents within the last three years.

"As a percentage of our overall economy, public spending on health care has been stable for close to a decade."

This budget approach of privatization, of shrinking public services, of shrinking services families need, is one that we will regret as the years go on, one that will undermine our ability to build a 21st-century economy in Ontario. This budget did not put families first and did not make life more affordable for them. In fact, it put corporate taxes first and leaves families paying more.

Liberals have said that they're turning a corner, but in fact, they're on a road that is not going to take us anywhere. It leaves families behind in the dust. It's a budget that defends a status quo that isn't working. It's a budget that this government cannot be proud of, a budget that, in fact, this government should be ashamed of.

1000

What's missing from this budget? Nothing to make life more affordable: Instead of taking the HST off hydro and home heating, the government ignored household budgets. Nothing to create jobs: Instead of tax breaks for companies that create jobs, the government is sticking with their strategy of no-strings-attached corporate tax giveaways. Nothing to protect front-line patient care: The budget has a vague plan to cut \$800 million from health budgets, and hospitals are getting a cut in real terms, but the government still won't cap health care CEO salaries.

What kind of budget is this, given the state of this province, given the state of our economy, given the social

problems that we're facing? Not a budget that will be remembered fondly, not a budget that will be seen as solving the problems of the people of Ontario, but simply adding to them.

There are a number of things that concern us, and I've addressed a few of them. This is a budget that simply preserves the status quo. While life gets more expensive for families and other provinces create more jobs, the Premier and his finance minister insist that their plan is working. Well, talk to people out there who are trying to make a go of it. I think you'll find out they don't believe that their plan is working.

Their plans to look at privatization, as I've outlined, are not a good direction to take. We've learned from Highway 407 what that means.

Health cuts: The Liberals are proposing 60,000 new post-secondary spaces—proposing; they haven't delivered. But they don't mention that Ontario has the highest tuition fees in Canada, and there's nothing in the budget that addresses the cost of post-secondary education. Talk to young people anywhere in this province. Talk to them after they've graduated from university or college. Talk to them about the burden that they are carrying from those high tuition fees. It is not a pretty picture. It is a picture of people whose early work years are burdened with huge debt payments, debt payments they're trying to make to avoid even more interest costs in the future. This government has not addressed that issue.

The Liberals are proposing a "deficit review committee" that will report after the next election. That's the kind of thing you do when you know you're going into an election and, when asked about something, say, "I have appointed a committee. They will look into it and they will report"—conveniently, after election day. What will the plan be? Who knows. Will it protect the people of this province? Will it be one that actually engages in totally irrational and destructive deep cuts to the services people depend on? Who knows. What we have got with that is a commitment to fill a campaign flyer with a little piece that keeps whatever speaker from the Liberal Party is on the spot with some material they can use.

Liberals are proposing a new risk management program for farmers, but farmers have been waiting for help for nearly a decade. Thank goodness that occasionally elections come along so that this government feels some vulnerability and feels they have to in some way address the concerns of the farming community. The Liberals are promising more breast cancer screening, but they don't mention the clinics in London that were closed or how they forced breast cancer patients to fight for treatment. That's the reality.

This government, as we skate towards an election, is looking for all the pieces that it's got to put into its campaign flyers and putting those little bits forward: little promises, little dodges, little bits of wording that will help them, they hope, slip forward, slip through.

Liberals tout statistics to say their jobs plan is working. They commit \$175 million in funding to a value-added job program led by the Ministry of Economic

Development. In accordance with the federal-provincial arrangement, stimulus money will be extended into the fall. The government revised their 2011 job creation numbers downward from 139,000 to 116,000, and from 155,000 to 118,000 in 2012. That's 60,000 fewer jobs than previously projected.

The government has confirmed its corporate tax schedule. Between this year and the next, the government is wasting another \$400 million on corporate tax giveaways, part of the overall \$4 billion. Our response to that is that the plan they put forward is not working for families. Ontario lags behind most provinces in recovering the jobs lost in the recession. Three years later, 16,000 jobs still haven't come back. Ontario lags behind provinces like Manitoba—which, by the way, rejected the HST—and is holding the line on corporate tax giveaways.

The government's own estimates show they're projecting 60,000 fewer jobs than previously expected. Narrowly targeted tax credits for training, innovation and investment will create jobs; broad-based corporate tax giveaways won't. At the beginning of my remarks, I went through those numbers, and I want to re-emphasize this: A strategy centred on corporate tax cuts only undermines the government's ability to provide the services that businesses and families need to live well and to prosper. They don't build an economy.

This government did not take the opportunity with regard to infrastructure to provide a comprehensive program that would ensure that whenever it's economically feasible, provincial and municipal procurement projects give preference to Ontario- and Canadian-made projects, Canadian-made goods and services, like streetcars or subway cars from Bombardier in Thunder Bay. If we're going to build our economy, we need to have that kind of focus on Ontario investment and purchase. We need to use the purchasing power of the government of Ontario—of the governments in Ontario—to build our manufacturing, to build our own economy.

The government has said that the HST leaves most people better off. The reality—and I had the opportunity to go through this in estimates with successive Ministers of Revenue—is that the HST is a \$7-billion tax shift from businesses to people, \$7 billion that used to be paid by businesses, now paid by the people of this province. The new tax on everything from gas to home heating is hurting already-struggling families. The government's estimates are based on unbelievable claims about businesses passing along savings to customers. Speaker, have you seen your gas bill reflect a passing-on of savings by those gas companies? Has your home heating bill gone down because of the generosity of those gas companies? I don't think so. There are a lot better ways of creating jobs than providing large-scale corporate tax cuts or putting in place an HST.

It's interesting, in terms of expenditure management. The budget states that expenses are lower than previously estimated and thus says, "We're great managers." Just the other day I was reading about Paul Martin and how

he had the very conscious strategy during the 1990s to consistently underestimate his revenue and overestimate his expenses, so that—

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I hear some howling from the other side—so that they could look as though they were performing so well. Paul Martin shifted the deficit down to the provinces. Paul Martin did an extraordinary job of impoverishing the province of Ontario and the province of Quebec by making them assume more of the costs that the federal government had covered in the past. We had a massive shell game, and at the end of it all, when the federal books looked better—not the provincial books but the federal books—then he gave what he called the biggest tax cut in Canadian history.

That was not good management. It may have been useful political management, because the heat was taken off him. Many major corporations became extraordinarily happy that they got all this cash, and as you are well aware, Speaker, over this last decade that cash was not used to actually put in place the equipment and machinery to make this country more prosperous; it wasn't put in place to make Canadian workers more productive; it was put in place so that Canadian corporations could accumulate almost half a trillion dollars in cash. That doesn't sound like a successful policy to me; it sounds like a bad policy to me.

I was around for the Canadian health and social transfer that Mr. Martin brought in, which led to an ongoing decline in funding for social programs and health care. This province complains that Ontario is paying too much of the health tax bill and the federal government not enough. Well, you know, that reflects the strategy of Mr. Martin to shift the cost of the deficit down onto the back of the province. That's the reality.

This is a budget that does not deserve support. This is a budget that will mean harder times for most people in Ontario. This is a budget that sets the stage for privatization of public services, far wealthier corporations and more expensive hospitals. It does not set the stage for a province that needs to prosper in the decades to come so that young people have a future and families have decent lives.

Everyone in this Legislature should vote against this budget.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being just about 10:15 of the clock, this House stands in recess until 10:30, at which time we'll have question period.

The House recessed from 1012 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming to the Speaker's gallery and the public galleries today Mr. Don McCumber, president of the Army Cadet League of Canada (Ontario); Marian MacDonald, executive director of the Army Cadet

League of Canada (Ontario); Mr. Ed Pigeau, president of the Royal Canadian Legion, Ontario Provincial Command; Lieutenant Colonel James Shields, deputy commander office, Regional Cadet Support Unit (Central); and cadets, officers and members of the Army Cadet League of Canada (Ontario) and parents, representing 106 army cadet corps in the province of Ontario who are here today to mark Vimy Ridge Day. Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, to Queen's Park.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Ça me fait plaisir aujourd'hui de souhaiter la bienvenue en Chambre aux gens du Centre Pauline-Charon dans ma circonscription, avec leur directeur général, Léo Lavergne.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'd like to take the opportunity to introduce some folks from the riding of Northumberland—Quinte West. First of all, as you mentioned, Mr. Don McCumber—he is also the chair of the Vimy kickoff committee; a job well done, Don and your group—and also the cadets, with special mention to the newest cadet corps in the province of Ontario, from my hometown of Brighton.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Minister of Government Services. Minister, it has been seven days now since questions have been raised about the three quarter of a million dollars paid out to Ron Sapsford, the deputy minister who left under the shadow of your eHealth scandal.

Yesterday, the health minister told the media that questions about the sweetheart deal for the former deputy “should go to the Minister of Government Services because that’s where the arrangements are made.”

Minister, this is not a tricky question. Who actually cut the deal with Mr. Sapsford? Was it the health minister or was it you?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: To the Minister of Finance.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

The member from Durham. The member from Halton. Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We need to have a little review of salaries and severance packages over the years, and I'd like to remind the members opposite of some of them. Let's talk for a moment about a fellow named Gord Haugh, who billed, with the approval of the government and without a tendered contract, \$25,000 a month to the Ministry of Health—\$300,000 a year—to serve as a press secretary. And let's not forget Eleanor Clitheroe, who was paid \$2 million a year and \$6 million in severance. Here is another old, familiar face to this House: Paul Rhodes, who billed Ontario Hydro—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Minister of Government Services: What an embarrassing merry-go-round of denying any kind of responsibility. The Premier points to the health minister; the health minister points to the Minister of Government Services; now you fob it off to the finance minister, and Ontario families get saddled with the bill at the end of the day. Who's in charge over there?

Minister, yesterday you were thrown under the bus by the health minister. The health minister said that you sign off on deals like the one with the deputy minister, Ron Sapsford. Mr. Sapsford was paid three quarters of a million dollars. We don't know if he worked for a single day, if he quit or what the reason is. Minister, if you weren't accountable for the deal to Mr. Sapsford, exactly who was?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In the first three years of the Harris-Hudak government, they paid out—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the honourable member of the fact of who was the Premier at the time. Thank you.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In the government that the now-Leader of the Opposition served in—and listen to this number—they paid out \$360 million in severance payments in three years. And who did they pay that to? They paid it to a whole variety of people, including civil servants whom they fired, then hired back as consultants at higher rates.

Let's just review a few more. Former Ontario Hydro president Allan Kupcis got nearly \$1 million in 1998 after he left. Carl Andognini: \$1 million and a lifetime pension of \$12,500 a month.

I've got a whole list. We're going to keep reviewing them. You've got a horrible record—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, what about Ron Sapsford and the deal you cut with Mr. Sapsford? We're seeing the same pattern of denial, of stonewalling, of dodging, of not talking about the questions that have been asked for seven straight days.

The minister seems to forget what this is all about—that money that was supposed to go to hospital services at Hamilton Health Sciences was used to pay off some kind of backroom deal to Mr. Sapsford for three quarters of a million dollars.

All we're asking, Minister, is a very simple, straightforward question. The Minister of Health says that you signed off on these deals. The Minister of Government Services: You're saying no, you didn't sign off on these deals. You're shaking your head “no.” Let me get you on the public record: Did you sign off on the deal? Was it the Minister of Health? Was it the Premier? Exactly who signed off on this deal with Mr. Sapsford?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Severance packages are based on contractual obligations and are signed off on by all the appropriate authorities.

But let's talk again about transparency and accountability. What we did with Mr. Sapsford was in full public

view. It was not hidden; it was in full public view. Each one of those hydro executives was expressly kept out of freedom of information and privacy by that leader and his party. They were a party of secrecy, of big expensive deals that went right to the bottom line of people's hydro bills.

We have cleaned that up. We've brought transparency, and the people of Ontario are much better served by this government than they were by that government that gave away tens of millions of dollars.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: I will ask again of the minister who is supposed to be the integrity czar in this Legislature, the Minister of Government Services. Sir, this is your responsibility. You can answer the questions here during question period or you can answer them in the hallway. I will give you a chance to answer a very basic question. Was Deputy Minister Ron Sapsford, who resigned in the wake of your eHealth scandal, fired, did he quit or did he remain on the provincial payroll? Minister, kindly answer that simple question.

1040

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: To the Minister of Finance.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Oxford and member from Durham, please come to order. Your leader wants to hear.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I wanted to review some other contracts that were let that were a lot more money, even in current dollars—

Mr. John O'Toole: I hear a bus coming.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Durham.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I think there's a second bus coming.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Halton, we can secure him a seat on that bus back to Milton.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Durham; member from Halton.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Under the Leader of the Opposition and the government he served in, a gentleman by the name of Tom Long was granted \$1.487 million by Hydro One at the time—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Your leader asks questions, and I trust that you do want to hear from the government. It's extremely difficult for me, in my position, to hear from where I am, and I'm sure it must be for you.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: A gentleman by the name of Michael Gourley—people will remember him—was an

adviser to former Premier Eves. He received \$3.7 million in untendered contracts. What makes this story even more interesting is, they paid him before the contract was signed. So a little perspective on these matters is always important, because a number of the members opposite signed off on all of those deals; a number of the members sitting opposite, who are now critical of our transparency and accountability, are just not being completely candid about their own record.

They gave away tens and hundreds of millions of dollars of hard-earned taxpayers' money. This government's record—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: We're seeing the exact same dodge, delay, dither and deny tactics that this government used during the eHealth scandal two years ago—a scandal, by the way, that saw the mother of all untendered contracts, that saw an absolute feeding frenzy of Liberal-friendly consultants for money that should have been going to health care. Two years later, Ontario families continue to pay the price for the eHealth boondoggle, and they haven't learned their lesson; they're using the same tactics. That's why it's time for a change in the province of Ontario.

I will ask the minister a very straightforward question, if he'll answer one question: Did this deal go to Management Board, and who was there?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In the Leader of the Opposition's last year in government, their party—

Mr. John Yakabuski: We don't want to hear about that.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: They don't want to hear this, but perspective is important—\$662 million in untendered consultants, and they actively encouraged that.

I remind the member opposite that when we brought in the Public Sector Expenses Review Act in 2009, which requires expenses to be posted by ministers and their staff, they voted against it. There are a whole range of these; I'm looking forward to discussing more of them.

What's important, is this party has invested in better health care, better education. We're not going to let them and their friends cut all the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, we understand your game here. You've dodged questions for seven straight days. You've had the Premier, the health minister, Minister Takhar, and now yourself refusing to answer basic questions. You can answer them here in the assembly; you can answer them in the hallway from the media; you can answer them from families, but you are trying to run from the eHealth scandal. But, sir, that is an albatross around your neck, and rightly so, because of the egregious waste of health care dollars to go to Liberal friends.

Let me ask you one last question. Ron Sapsford got a sweetheart three quarters of a million dollars. You tried to confuse the issue by saying it was severance, but obviously it was not. Is he still on the payroll? Did he

quit? Why did he get expenses? Won't you say one thing about what happened with Ron Sapsford and put the truth before the people who pay the bills?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It's all in the public record; it's in two spots in the public record. But what wasn't in the public record and what constituted, to use the leader of the opposition's language, "a dodge," was when that previous government refused to put the hydro agencies under freedom of information and accountability. We did that. When we did it, we discovered a range of things. I remember the Air Canada Centre box that that member and his party purchased. A number of now-members of the opposition attended that box. We got rid of it after about two weeks in office.

What's really important to the people of Ontario is, they know the investments we've made in health and education. What they want to know is: Why do they want to cut \$3 billion from education and health care? How are they going to do it? How many hospitals will they close? How many nurses will they lay off?

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's a lie and you know it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew will withdraw the comment that he just made.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question. The leader of the third party.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Here's how things look in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario: Former—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the honourable member about the use of names.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Here's how things look in the McGuinty Liberals' Ontario: Former Deputy Minister of Health Ron Sapsford pocketed more than three quarters of a million dollars in wages and benefits last year, even though he didn't work a day as the deputy. At a time when Ontarians are struggling to pay the bills, how does this government justify paying someone three quarters of a million dollars for not working a single day?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The contractual obligations that we honoured were published in the public record. We have worked hard to make the investments that we need to make in health care, and those investments are yielding real benefits to all Ontarians. I had a chance to tour the new angioplasty unit at Hôtel-Dieu Grace Hospital a number of weeks ago, and a range of other opportunities over the course of time. So I think we need to keep these things in the context of the enormous achievements we've made in health care over the years, achievements that I know the Minister of Health will speak more about later in question period. We're proud of our record in health care. We have worked hard to deliver the best health care and education system this province has ever had. We're going to continue to build on that record of achievement.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ron Sapsford's golden handshake might just be the tip of the iceberg here. Today we're learning that the former CEO of Ottawa's Montfort Hospital got an even sweeter exit package. He left in 2009 but got paid more than \$550,000 in 2010, and he will get the same in 2011. With emergency rooms closing, nurses being laid off and seniors being threatened with \$1,800 a day just to stay in the hospital, how on earth can this Premier sit idly by while millions of dollars are shovelled out the door to executives?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me begin by saying that we welcome transparency and accountability. We have taken significant steps to improve the transparency so that we can have exactly this kind of conversation. The member opposite knows that arrangements regarding hospital CEOs are arrangements made between the board and the hospital CEO. I do want to say, though, that I think it's very, very important that we remind hospital boards that they have a responsibility to the taxpayer. It is the taxpayer who is paying for these salaries and for these severance packages.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

1050

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What we would welcome is some action on these fiascos; that's what we would welcome. This Premier and his minister can't continue to defend the indefensible. So instead, what does he do? He rewards it. How else can we explain the appointment of Rosemarie Leclair as the new head of the Ontario Energy Board? This is the same Rosemarie Leclair who, as head of Hydro Ottawa, spent almost \$30,000 of ratepayers' money on corporate box seats at Ottawa Senators games.

Things are clearly out of control and Ontarians are being fleeced. When is this Premier finally going to stand up and say enough is enough?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm delighted to stand in this place and talk about the credentials of Rosemarie Leclair. She served as deputy city manager of the city of Ottawa for a number of years. St. Joseph's Women's Centre gave her the quality of life award. She's an honoured champion of the United Nations Association in Canada. She sits on the board of directors for the United Way and the board of governors of the University of Ottawa. She's one of Canada's most powerful women, as recognized by the Women's Executive Network in 2010.

This is one qualified woman whom we're very proud to have as our chair of the Ontario Energy Board, and I defy the NDP to find a better candidate.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier. The Premier's poor decision-making extends beyond the outrageous salaries and questionable appointments. He's also stubbornly clinging to the notion that

massive corporate tax giveaways will help Ontario's economy, despite plenty of evidence to the contrary.

With so many Ontario families struggling to make ends meet, why is this Premier insisting on putting the needs of big corporations and profitable banks ahead of the needs of Ontario families?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These questions are kind of going all over the place today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The question was to the Premier.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I thought it was the supplementary.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm delighted to take the question, and I'm always interested in the enthusiasm expressed by my colleagues opposite.

My honourable colleague has raised this issue a number of times over and that is the merit of, as she describes them, corporate tax cuts. I'd ask my colleague to bring some fresh perspective to our government's plan when it comes to reducing the tax burden: not just on our businesses, but also on our families.

We also have in place a measure, the clean energy benefit, to reduce the burden on our families as we, together, restore vitality to our electricity system. We're renewing 80% of it over the course of the next 20 years.

What we have is a comprehensive, thoughtful plan that is reducing the tax burden on families and our businesses in order to ensure we have a strong economy that supports our health care and our schools.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Globe and Mail's analysis of Statistics Canada data proves what New Democrats have been saying all along: Corporate tax giveaways don't create jobs. In fact, yesterday the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives issued its own study looking into 198 of Canada's top corporations. They found the same thing.

When is the Premier going to come to his senses and realize that massive corporate tax giveaways aren't the way to bring good jobs back to Ontarians?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm sure my honourable colleague will recognize that we've entered into an era of hypercompetitiveness; an era of globalization. We're no longer just competing with the folks across town or the people in Quebec or Manitoba or BC or the US; we're now competing with the Chinese and the Indians and other parts of the world. So it's very important that we do everything to ensure that our businesses are competitive.

I think results speak volumes. We have recovered 91% of the jobs lost during the recession. In the United States of America they recovered 17%, and in the United Kingdom they recovered 40%. So that speaks to, I would argue, the merit of the plan that we have put in place. Of those 91% of jobs that we've recovered, 84% of those jobs are in fact full-time jobs.

So we've put that in some perspective, and in the supplementary I'll speak—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Clearly the Premier just doesn't get it. Here are some of the results he should be paying some attention to: According to the CCPA, these large companies reported a 50% increase in profits and paid 20% less in taxes while growing their employment by only 5%. That's less than the 6% employment growth for the entire economy.

From outrageous compensation for health care executives to questionable appointments to nonsensical tax policy, why can't this Premier and his government get anything right?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, everybody is entitled to their own opinion but not to their own facts, so let's revisit a few more of the facts.

Private sector investment in building, machinery and equipment rose 10% in the third quarter of 2010. That's our strongest gain since 1998. Manufacturing sales are up 24% year over year. If we look at the auto sector, where hundreds of thousands of families earn their living, GM sales are up 26% year over year, Chrysler has recorded a 16th consecutive month of year-over-year sales growth, and Ford has had its best March in a decade.

By any objective measure, our plan is working, the economy is growing, jobs are coming back and Ontarians have every reason to believe they can look forward to the future with optimism.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Minister of Government Services. All week, the Premier and the health minister have let the media and the public believe that the three-quarters-of-a-million-dollar payout to Ron Sapsford was severance. The health minister and, apparently, the finance minister say that you are really the one to ask. We know, from the guide to preparing the sunshine list, as well as from Ministry of Finance spokespeople, that this can't be severance.

Minister, this is really about ministerial accountability. You can either answer my question or you won't. Do you want to be accountable to this Legislature or not? Ron Sapsford was paid three quarters of a million dollars for what? People in Ontario would like to know.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me say this: I've had the privilege of working both in the private sector and in the public sector. I want to tell you that, based on my experience in the public sector and the private sector, we have very outstanding individuals working in our Ontario public sector, and I'm very proud of the work that they perform.

We are a large and complicated organization with a \$120-billion-plus budget, so we want to attract the best talent that we can find in Ontario, and the Ontario people deserve nothing less than that. When you do that, you go and look for people outside. If, for any reason, the employees are terminated, I can say that the employees have the option to remain on the payroll utilizing entitlements such as accumulated vacation and severance instead of receiving a lump sum payment.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Minister, you didn't tell us what Mr. Sapsford is getting paid for. You're trying to justify a three-quarters-of-a-million-dollar payout and you're trying to conceal that from this Legislature.

The McGuinty Liberals—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment that she just made, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

The McGuinty Liberals act as though the money they handed out to Ron Sapsford was theirs to use as a personal slush fund, but it's Ontario families who are footing the bills for your sweetheart deal and they're getting cheated out of front-line health care, particularly in the city of Ottawa.

The Ontario PC Party will undertake a sunshine review that roots out the McGuinty Liberals' mysterious sweetheart deals. We think that three quarters of a million dollars is better spent on front-line health care. Why do you think it is better spent on the sweetheart deal to Ron Sapsford?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: As I was saying, we are a large, complicated organization and we need to attract the best talent. When you attract the best talent, you need to then pay the people based on whatever the market rates are. Let me tell you that the average salary of the broader public sector has decreased, and average OPS salaries on the list dropped by 1%; the use of secondment has decreased from 8% in 2008 to 2% today in the health sector. The 400 top-earning OPS employees on the list saw their salaries decrease this year. We have done everything to contain salaries based on our economic circumstances, but we still need to attract the best-qualified people we can find to the Ontario public service.

1100

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Hearings on plans to build a new nuclear plant at Darlington conclude tomorrow. Last week, Greenpeace stated that the McGuinty government decided not to participate in the review panel in order to ensure that the hearings would not consider alternatives to nuclear power.

Why is the McGuinty government so afraid of considering cheaper, safer and cleaner alternatives to a \$30-billion-plus nuclear power plant?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We're leading the world when it comes to building cleaner, cheaper renewable energy in this province. We're a global leader when it comes to that, and your party has not supported the investments we've made to get out of dirty coal and to invest in clean, renewable power in this province. You can't have it both ways.

We're making these investments because they're very important investments. We're building a clean, reliable and modern energy system, and they have blocked us

every step of the way. They have not supported those investments in any way, shape or form. And now they get up and tell us we should be doing more of something that they didn't support in the first place.

We're leading the world. We're proud to be leading the world. We're creating thousands of jobs and we're helping Ontario families adjust to the costs with our clean energy benefit.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Perhaps a nice speech, but not an answer. The McGuinty government's long-term energy plan says nuclear power has to continue to provide 50% of Ontario's electricity for decades to come, without giving any rationale.

A recent poll by Abacus found that more than half of Ontarians now oppose building more nuclear power plants. When will the McGuinty government finally listen to Ontarians and at least allow a discussion of alternatives to nuclear power?

Hon. Brad Duguid: When the NDP are in opposition, they oppose nuclear power, but when they're in government, what do they do? They build it. Prior to the NDP's term in government, they opposed investments in nuclear power, just like—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm going to have to take this opportunity to warn the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Please continue.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I think this is really important. In the NDP's first three years in office, they brought online over 3,500 megawatts of nuclear power. No other party in the history of this province, in such a short period of time, has ever brought on that amount of nuclear power. Yet when they're in opposition, they continue to oppose it. What is it? Does the NDP support nuclear power? Do they oppose it? Or does it depend on whether they're in opposition or government—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, it is clear that the McGuinty government is delivering on high-quality health care. The 2011 budget committed additional funding to a number of important health care services, including mental health and addictions and breast cancer.

The opposition parties voted against these very investments yesterday when they voted on the budget motion. As a member of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, I was shocked that they could vote against such an important part of our health care system that will help improve the lives of so many Ontarians.

Can the minister tell members in this House in more detail just what commitments have been made for mental health and addictions in the 2011 budget?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for the question. I am very pleased to outline some of the health care investments in the 2011 budget.

One initiative I am enormously proud of is the investment in mental health. The budget commits to strengthening services for children's mental health with immediate funding and funding that will grow over the next three years. By 2013-14, the funding to support the mental health and addictions strategy will grow to \$93 million per year. These services will help improve the lives of children and help improve the lives of their families in Ontario. It's something we're very proud of, especially in these very challenging fiscal times.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm incredibly proud to be part of a government which chooses to ensure high-quality health care, even in tough economic times.

Minister, another area of concern for many women and men is breast cancer screening. I understand that there will be further funding in this area as well. Unfortunately, during debate on the budget bill yesterday afternoon, the member for Durham didn't seem clear on these investments; in fact, he said, "There's nothing in Bill 173 on breast screening."

Can the minister explain to this House just how the funding for these programs works since the opposition don't seem convinced?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted to outline additional investment in Ontario's health system. The Ontario breast screening program will receive an additional \$15 million. That is an expansion that means 90,000 more breast cancer screenings. I am delighted with this initiative.

For the last 20 years, the Ontario breast screening program has been providing high-quality scans for women aged 50 to 74. This investment means that we will be expanding breast screening for high-risk women between the ages of 30 and 49. So this truly is an advancement when it comes to protecting people from breast cancer. Early detection, as we all know, is a very important contributor to getting our survival rates as high as they are, and we can—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is again to the Minister of Government Services. Even if the Minister of Health is prepared to throw you under the bus for making the arrangements to pay—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

I just want to remind all members that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I wanted to remind members of something, and the Minister of Energy was interjecting.

It is very common in this chamber to criticize government policy, and I think it's certainly the opposition's role to do that, but I just remind all members that when we start to bring it down to a level of making a comment directly at another member—and I'm hearing it from both sides; it's coming from this side too—it's not healthy for anything and any of the business within this chamber. I just remind all members: Let's not make comments of a personal nature—

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's not personal.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Renfrew, perhaps you might like to sit in this chair at some point.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): My job is to try to facilitate the business of this House and ensure that we do so in a respectful way.

Please continue.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The reality is that you sit on the Management Board of Cabinet that approved the sweetheart deal. So does the finance minister, the Attorney General, the Minister of Transportation, the Minister of Infrastructure, the Minister of Tourism, the Minister of Community and Social Services and the members from Kitchener–Conestoga and from Guelph. Why didn't you blow the whistle, any of you, on the three-quarters-of-a-million-dollar payout to Ron Sapsford after the eHealth boondoggle?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Management Board and treasury board of cabinet exercise due responsibility in honouring legal agreements and respecting contractual obligations that were entered into. Then Management Board, treasury board, ensured that this was published in the sunshine list so that it could be seen by all Ontarians.

We will continue to build on our success in health care, to build the best-quality health care we can, by making investments in the services that people across this province want: better access to health care, shorter wait times, more nurses, more doctors and more options for a better future for Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The more we see these three-quarters-of-a-million-dollar or million-dollar payouts from the health care budget means there's less money going into front-line care.

1110

Ontario families are shocked to learn that you buried the sweetheart deal with Ron Sapsford in the budget of a hospital. When they look at hospital budgets, they expect to see that every dollar is being spent on front-line care, not payouts to bureaucrats to run the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle. The Ontario PC caucus believes that three quarters of a million dollars is better spent on 10 weeks of surgery at the Queensway Carleton Hospital,

which is being threatened this year with rolling shut-downs and closures in their surgical unit.

My question is, why did the members of Management Board think it was better to spend this money on a mysterious payoff to former health bureaucrats than the hospital in my community?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This government reopened the Montfort and Ottawa Hospitals that that member and her party cancelled. Let's talk about that party's record.

I understand your outrage about \$700,000, but you were part of a government that gave \$917,000 in severance to one Mr. Michael Gourley. You know what? You ought to look at your own track record. Why did you do it? Do you know what the total payment to him in untendered contracts and severance was? It was made by the Leader of the Opposition and by a number of members of that caucus—\$4.6 million. You should be outraged about that. You should stand up for your constituents. Tell them what your colleagues did.

You can yell all you want; the record speaks louder than the loudest voice in this Legislature—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

Member from Oxford; Minister of Finance.

Perhaps with our great guests here from the cadets today, it might be a wonderful opportunity for members to go and visit some of our local cadet corps around the province and get a better understanding of discipline and respect.

New question.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Housing. The government's affordable housing bill, Bill 140, will gut what little provincial oversight currently exists to prevent the sale of public housing to private for-profit interests. This is exactly what's happening in Toronto with the sale of much-needed TCHC public housing properties.

Is this the government's housing strategy—stand by while public housing is sold off to the highest bidder?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The fact is that nothing could be farther from the truth. We're very, very proud of our long-term affordable housing strategy, should it pass into law. At this point in time, it has received first and second reading. Then, because we want to make sure we're getting it right, we send it off to committee. We had public deputations. Now we're at the amendment stage.

What's happening here is, we've listened to the official opposition and the third party; we've listened to public providers; we've listened to the public at large. We've gone clause-by-clause. We're making amendments. Those amendments are being debated now. I would suggest to you that, at the end of the day, we will have the strongest long-term affordable housing strategy in place across Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Ontario now has 152,000 families on waiting lists for an average of 10 to 12 years. Each and every Ontarian should have a right to affordable and quality housing. That's what the United Nations says, by the way, which finds Ontario in breach of international law. What's happening in Toronto with the sale of TCHC properties could just be the tip of the iceberg.

This morning, I put forward a motion that would prohibit selling social housing to the private sector. The government committee members voted against this motion. When will this government take action to stop the privatization of the few remaining affordable housing units we have?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: It was interesting: In the supplementary, she mentioned the legislative process that we're going through right now with this legislation. I think that's very, very healthy.

We will continue to debate those amendments that are being made by this side of the House, the official opposition and the third party. At the end of the day, we're going to make sure that when we bring back a bill for third reading it is the strongest possible legislation. Why do we do that? Because we understand that there has to be a provincial affordable long-term plan in place.

We would only hope that the third party, federally, would convince the government of Canada that a long-term affordable housing strategy—a national strategy—is what's—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Dave Levac: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, you know this: Along with the Premier, myself and many caucus colleagues attended the seventh annual Premier's summit on agri-food. The summit provides an excellent opportunity for partners in the agri-food industry to come together, to sit down with the Premier and yourself and to discuss the many challenges and opportunities that exist within that sector. By working together, we build on the partnerships, innovation and economic opportunities that already make this industry very successful. This sector is an extremely powerful economic engine that helps and needs our attention. Can I ask the minister: Can she please share some of the highlights that have happened at the summit this year?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: Thank you very much for the question. I can tell you that it's my pleasure to share that the winner of the 2010 Premier's Award is Willowgrove Hill from Perth county. The Hill family are the first pork producers in North America to enrich their pork with DHA omega-3 fatty acids. I tell you, it's innovation on the family farm.

The 2010 Minister's Award was presented to Duzier Farms from Brant county. They were recognized for their innovative robotic dairy barn design. The design enables a single producer to manage a milking herd of up to 120

cows. For the smaller dairy producers, it means less time in the barn and more time spent with family.

I'm also pleased to say that not only are we encouraging innovation on the family farm; I'm very pleased to report—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Dave Levac: Ontario farmers continue to show outstanding leadership when it comes to innovation, and we all know that. I'm very proud to say that the Duzier family farm in my riding's recognition by the minister was very deeply appreciated by the family.

Minister, I've met with the farmers in my riding on an ongoing basis. I believe our government is on the right track, and so do they: investments in programs such as the establishment of the Premier's award for innovation and excellence and, recently, the risk management program announced in last week's budget. This risk management program is the number one ask for the farmers in my riding, and they did so together. Knowing that you can count on stable financial support means an awful lot. Sandra Vos, the president of the Brant County Federation of Agriculture, said, "This will go a long way in increasing the sustainability of Brant's largest industry." Could the minister—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: We count on our farmers, and we believe that our farmers should be able to count on us. We're supporting the family farm. This budget supports the hard work of our Ontario farmers. With the leadership of the Ontario Agricultural Sustainability Coalition, commodity programs and organizations, they developed their programs: programs by farmers, for farmers.

But I really do believe that we need to look at how the previous government treated our farmers. I tell you, they sat idly by while they let the land—they cut the ag budget; they shut down 42 offices. But what they really want to have an answer to, for our farmers, is why they voted against risk management in the budget. That program is designed—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1120

SCHOOL TRUSTEES

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Education. Two weeks ago, I asked the minister to clarify whether the York Region District School Board's direction to trustees to not meet with parents in private was a direction from her office. She confirmed that it was not, and she rightly reaffirmed in the House the appropriate role of trustees as representatives of the parents who elected them and that in fact the administration is accountable to elected trustees.

Today, I want to ask if it's a policy of the Ministry of Education to censor the websites and Facebook and Twitter accounts of elected trustees. Is that in fact a policy? Because at the York region school board, that is exactly what has happened.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: First of all, I would say to the honourable member that I had an opportunity to speak with the chair and trustees from the York region school board just this week. I was at a wonderful school opening at Bond Lake. We talked about the role of trustees and their responsibilities; to the people who voted for them in the municipal election in October. I have to say that, in my view, they were very clear about their responsibilities, they were very clear about the importance of working with administration to ensure that the wishes and the needs of students and parents in their communities were looked after.

I have to say that I'm surprised the honourable member is bringing this to me, because from the conversation I had with the elected trustees, they were very eager to ensure that they were available—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Yes, the elected trustees want to be available; it is the administration that directed trustees not to be available in private with parents, and I thank the minister for clarifying that.

With regard to the issue I'm bringing to her today, the reality is that trustees have been directed by the administration to remove information from their personal websites. This is information that was on those websites while they were seeking office and informing the very parents who voted for them about their positions on various issues.

I'd like to ask the minister: Will she agree to clarify for the director of education and his administration what their role is and put an end to this gag order that the director of education and the administration are putting on elected trustees?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I think it's very unfortunate when people in this assembly use this place to cast aspersions on the work of people who've been hired by locally elected trustees. When there are statements in this assembly that someone is not fulfilling their role appropriately, that is in fact the case.

I have had the opportunity just this week to speak with the elected leadership of the board as well as the director of education. They've certainly indicated to me that they work well together, with the best interests of their students and parents in mind. They are focused on ensuring that their policies enable them to go forward in their operation, in their duties, in an open and transparent—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

FOREST INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. This government stood by while northern communities like Wawa and Dubreuilville lost their wood supply, putting at risk not only the jobs of those employees directly affected but the viability of entire communities.

Dubreuilville is a community of less than 1,000 people who directly depend on the forestry industry. The community has suffered enough during the recent economic

downturn while their sawmill was temporarily closed, but now they are denied by this government the ability to resume work.

Why does the Premier not support the community of Dubreuilville in their bid to hold on to their wood allocation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: The goal is to modernize the Ontario forest tenure and pricing system, and I think the member opposite knows that. We will make the licensing of crown forests more efficient by opening them up to new businesses to generate new and diversified investments. We are improving and increasing the market mechanisms and the pricing and allocation of crown timber. We are increasing the involvement of aboriginal and local communities in the forest industry, which will contribute to their economic development.

Bill 151, as the member opposite knows, is open for public hearings. We will be holding public hearings next week, and we look forward to hearing from a wide variety of stakeholders and individuals across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The people of Dubreuilville are shocked that the government would take away their wood allocation. They didn't even have the decency to go and consult with the community. Then they sit on their hands while the forestry industry and those who depend on it suffer. The northeastern Superior region has been one of the hardest hit during the recession, losing 1,000 direct forestry jobs.

Why is this government allowing local mills to close while entire communities suffer? Do they just not care about northern Ontario?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: To the member opposite: We care passionately about northern Ontario. We have many advocates on this side of the House who speak of northern Ontario incessantly, as many of my colleagues will attest to.

With respect to this legislation and our changes to the forest tenure act, we began our review in 2009. Since then, the ministry has held consultation sessions throughout northern Ontario, including in Beardmore, Bower, Cochrane, Dryden, Fort Frances, Hearst, Hornepayne, Kapuskasing, Marathon, North Bay, Pembroke—although we wouldn't all consider Pembroke in the north—Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Timmins and White River. We have conducted over 116 consultations in total, and we have offered Web-based engagement tools as well. We are continuing to offer that openness. People can participate—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question is to the Minister of Education. I'm hearing from parents in Peterborough who have their children enrolled in full-day kindergarten. They

are pleased with the program and the progress that their children are making while learning in a positive environment for the entire day.

Part of the reason I'm hearing that parents think this program is so successful is because of the extended day portion of the program. Parents can drop off and pick up their children from the same location and their children are provided with programming that reinforces the play-based learning that they take part in during the day.

I've had parents who have heard that there may be changes coming to the extended day portion of the program. Could you please inform me what I can tell the parents about these changes and how they will affect the lives of hard-working families in the wonderful riding of Peterborough?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm delighted to, because it gives me the opportunity to talk about the fact that I've been to schools in Peterborough and I've seen first-hand the wonderful results of full-day kindergarten.

With respect to the changes that we have proposed, families have said that it's very important to them that they have access to extended day programs, both before and after school. There are many examples in the province of Ontario where those programs are being delivered by independent third parties like YMCAs and Boys and Girls Clubs. So we have introduced amendments to the act that will enable boards to engage those independent third parties.

I'm really surprised and disappointed, though, that the members of the opposition voted against that yesterday, again blocking opportunities for families to access quality—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Minister, I will provide that clarification about the proposed changes to the extended day portion of full-day kindergarten to the parents in Peterborough. I think the parents will be pleased to know that the government is moving forward in a practical manner which will allow parents to continue to have their children at the same location for full-day kindergarten and the extended day program.

Minister, you stated that the opposition voted against full-day kindergarten, though just yesterday, the member from Kitchener-Waterloo said they would implement the program. Minister, parents in the wonderful riding of Peterborough are concerned about the future of full-day kindergarten and the contradictory comments that have been provided by the opposition from one day to the next.

Minister, what is the government doing to ensure that full-day kindergarten is implemented in a responsible way across this great province?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Families have made it very clear that full-day kindergarten is a priority for them. That's why it is a priority for this government and that is why we are committed to fully implementing it by 2014. That is also why we are providing school boards every year with the capital dollars that are needed to

create the spaces. We have done that this year, and we will do it next year and for the third phase. We are taking a responsible, measured approach to this.

And we are providing capital dollars. I was very surprised that, again, the opposition voted against that investment to provide those capital dollars. In my view, it just reflects that they are in disarray, they have no plan and they are very, very uncertain about a lot of things. Certainly in—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Minister of the Environment: Your continued inaction on waste diversion and waste management has left Ontario on the brink of a garbage crisis. Edwards landfill, in Haldimand county, is a prime example of your government's oblivious lack of action. After years of questions, petitions and local protests, landfill operators have been handed provincial orders requiring 37 items to be complied with by May 20. Haldimand Against Landfill Transfers, also known as HALT, has written you requesting that the site be closed until these 37 items are dealt with. Will you be closing the site, Minister?

1130

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to assure the member opposite—and I thank him for bringing the issue to my attention, of course—that we expect companies and municipalities to comply with provincial orders. It is not a question of whether they decide or not to comply with orders; they must comply with provincial orders. We'll continue to work closely with companies and municipalities that are dealing with municipal waste and requiring them to make sure that they always come in compliance with the law.

I find the question odd, on this side of the House. There are seven million litres of used paint that is not in our landfills because we're taking action when it comes to household hazardous waste. There are 33,000 tonnes of waste electronics that are not in our landfills because we have taken action. There are almost a million tonnes a year through the blue box because we believe the blue box is a way for people to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Look: You've been asked to close the site. These are significant issues—issues of asbestos, leachate levels and spill contingencies. There have been questions and concerns at this site since it began to receive garbage again, back in 2009.

While people see the issuing of orders as a step forward, they're naturally sceptical given the history and given the ineptitude of your government when it comes to waste diversion and waste management.

Recognizing the seriousness of these questions, could you please provide people in my riding, at minimum, an update as to the work at Edwards to meet these compli-

ance orders? What will your ministry do if those orders are not fulfilled by the May 20 deadline?

Hon. John Wilkinson: We'll do what we always do, which is ensure that people are actually respecting and complying with the laws of the province of Ontario. That's why we have environmental protections.

I can, though, assure the member and his constituents that there have been no environmental impacts from the leachate breach. We ordered the landfill to submit an odour management plan and a proper application of cover to stop the dust. It also requires that the old hazardous waste site is to be cleaned up. We are routinely inspecting the Edwards landfill.

They also conduct periodic sampling and monitoring, ensuring that surface water controls remain effective and the site is secure. I assure the member that we have placed orders and we expect them to be complied with, and if they are not—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Michael Prue: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: For the past two days, we have heard about people whose housing is at great risk. TCHC's new mandate seems to be to sell off housing stock and privatize.

Mrs. Janice Hatfield and her son, a student—my constituents—live at 2 Wineva Avenue, and they've been given notice that she will be losing her home of nearly 20 years. Her housing is threatened because the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, who has the final authority, has, to this time, taken no action to stop the city of Toronto from selling its housing stock and privatizing public housing.

My question is: Will the minister commit today that he will protect Mrs. Hatfield?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: There are two parts to the question. The first one I'm going to deal with is with regard to the Toronto Community Housing Corp. First of all, the member knows full well that that is an entity run by the city of Toronto.

Secondly, he would know that some of the units that are up for sale do not need ministerial approval; others will need ministerial approval. I think that this government has a record, before making decisions, to ensure that there is a very thorough review of each of those units before a determination is made.

But this is all hypothetical, because the city of Toronto, the council of Toronto, will determine which houses go on the market.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Mrs. Hatfield and her son have lived in their home for nearly 20 years. She has many elderly neighbours who find their homes at risk as well. She worries for them and for herself; she broke down in tears yesterday.

Royson James of the Toronto Star described this charade of a hearing yesterday. He said:

“Absurdity piled on top of arrogance....

“Such is the case when a public body is reduced to the farce of one-man rule....

“Such arrogance. Such autocratic excess. Such unnecessary and undemocratic indulgence.”

This minister can put a stop to this with the stroke of a pen. Will he do that and stop this cruel charade in its tracks?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The second part of the question that I want to deal with now is our long-term affordable housing strategy as it ties into ensuring that those protections are built into a new long-term affordable housing strategy.

We're very confident that this strategy is a very powerful document, but do you know what? We want to make sure that we've covered all the concerns that may be presented in the future, so we opened it up to committee hearings. We heard deputations from the providers, the different people involved in affordable housing. We're going through those amendments right now. At the end of the day, the legislation we bring forth for third reading will be very strong legislation.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I refer to standing order 23(f):

“In debate, a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she....

“Reflects upon any previous vote of the House unless it is the member's intention to move that it be rescinded.”

On two occasions today, both in lob-ball questions to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and then, subsequently, a lob-ball question to the Minister of Education, they referred to the vote in the House yesterday on the budget motion. They specifically indicated in their answers about specific items relating to their ministries. The vote taken in the House yesterday simply stated “that the House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.” There were no details in that motion whatsoever.

Back to 23(f): The standing orders are clear that, unless you intend to request that that vote be rescinded, you not refer to it when talking about how members in this House have voted.

I know you have ruled on it or you have at least ventured an opinion on it, because I have raised—or maybe we haven't got it back yet.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's what I'm just going to get to.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm raising it again. Thank you very much. I forgot you haven't given us a ruling yet.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): As the honourable member in the House is aware, this is an issue that was raised last week. I took it under advisement at the time and want to take the opportunity to assure the members that it is under currently under review, the points that had been raised, and I will be reporting to the House with a ruling.

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: With reference to standing order 37(e), I advised the government House leader that I would be rising on this point of order a few minutes ago when the incident occurred.

The leader of the New Democratic Party, in her question number five, put the question to the Premier about wood allocations in northern Ontario, especially Wawa and Dubreuilville. The Premier referred the question to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, also government House leader.

I look at standing order 37(e): “A minister to whom an oral question is directed may refer the question to another minister who is responsible for the subject-matter to which the question relates.”

Unless something has happened overnight with respect to the status of the government House leader and her status as Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, I can't for the life of me understand how her ministerial responsibilities relate to the subject matter of the question put by Ms. Horwath. I seek your guidance and ruling on that matter, please.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke on the same point of order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I thank my colleague from the third party for raising this point of order and share his concern that it is not the area of the minister's responsibility to be answering questions of the nature that were asked today. If the Premier does not—he has the choice, I suppose, of directing them to the minister who is directly responsible for that area, as is provided for in the standing orders. But I don't know that he's allowed to pass them on to any minister that he wants to, because that minister has no responsibility for that ministerial level at all. So I do share my concerns with the House leader of the third party.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister without portfolio.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: A little-known fact, probably, is that I'm the deputy House leader, so I'm responding on behalf of the House leader just to say, Mr. Speaker, that we'll be providing you with a written response to the point of order raised by my colleague here.

Mr. Peter Kormos: If I may speak directly?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I appreciate that, and I had no intention of trying to ambush either the government House leader or the deputy House leader.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: She had to leave on—

Mr. Peter Kormos: And that's fair enough. Perhaps, if there are written submissions made, the opposition parties could have an opportunity to respond to those written submissions before the Speaker makes a ruling.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to thank the member from Welland, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and the minister without portfolio.

I was prepared to rule on this, but having heard from the deputy House leader of a written response coming

forward and now hearing from the member from Welland that they would welcome the opportunity to comment on that response, I will reserve my decision and await the submission from the government and the comments back from the two parties.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1141 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I would like to take this opportunity to introduce two guests from the Momiji Health Care Society in Scarborough: the executive director, Ms. Birgitte Robertson, and the director of residence, Yoneko Westergaard. Momiji residents and staff have raised over \$31,000 for Japanese victims of the recent earthquake and tsunami, and I want to take this opportunity to congratulate them on their generosity. I also want to express my sincere sadness and to say to the Japanese people that my prayers and thoughts are with them.

Mr. Reza Moridi: It is my distinct pleasure to introduce the following guests: from York Central Hospital, Dr. Larry Grossman, Ms. Elizabeth Barnett, Ms. Melina Cormier, Ms. Arlene Webster; from the Ontario Medical Association, Dr. Mark MacLeod, Ms. Emily Bullock, Ms. Emily Jephcott; from the Hospital for Sick Children, Dr. Nana Bit-Avragim; and Dr. Saeid Hatami. Please join me in welcoming our guests.

Mr. Rick Johnson: I'd like to introduce, in the west members' gallery, Karra Wesley from Haliburton. She owns the Haliburton Language School and is down to visit today. Welcome.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to welcome to Queen's Park and introduce, in the gallery, an old friend of mine and an ex-colleague, Diana Dai. She's a TV and film producer, winner of a 2009 Gemini Award, and a 2010 Yorkton film award for best history documentary for China's Earthquake, the People in the Pictures. Welcome, Diana.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WASTE DISPOSAL

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I make this statement on behalf of the member for Durham, Mr. O'Toole, who couldn't be with us this afternoon.

"I rise again to draw attention to the ongoing soil disposal operations on Morgans Road in the riding of Durham. Every day that passes without action from this government brings more truckloads of fill on to this site. With every truckload comes more anxiety and worry to those families who live in the area. They worry about what is being dumped at the site. They worry if what is being dumped could impact their drinking water. But

most of all, they worry about the safety of their families and children.

"A full month before any permits were issued in June by the conservation authority, filling was taking place on Morgans Road. To date, this illegal fill has not been removed. To make matters worse, this fill was dumped in a protected source water area on the site.

"Our party wants to thank the Clarington Citizens for Clean Water and Soil for their advocacy on this issue. We also want to thank a number of residents, including: Gerry Black, Michael Clay, Sherry Ibbotson, Ted and Beth Meszaros, Lou Speziale, Donna Middleton, Kerry Meydam and Debbie Gordon from the STORM Coalition, and Councillor Wendy Partner. All have taken action on this issue. Unfortunately, we can't say the same for this government.

"I call on the Minister of the Environment to take control and ensure the soil and material being moved on site is not harmful to residents and their families."

PRATT AND WHITNEY CANADA

Mr. Kuldip Kular: On Friday of last week, I was joined by the Minister of Economic Development and Trade to announce that our government is making strategic investments in the renowned aerospace company Pratt and Whitney Canada.

The benefits of this partnership include creating 80 high-value jobs and preserving 49 others; reducing the impact of air travel on our natural environment; and raising Ontario's profile as an economic and technology leader, not to mention an outstanding place to do business.

Our grant of \$13.9 million and Pratt and Whitney's own investment of \$139.2 million will create jobs in Bramalea-Gore-Malton and help keep Ontario's economic recovery on track. It also brings our government closer to fulfilling the commitment we made by way of the 2011 budget: to find new private sector partnerships, to create 2,100 jobs and preserve a further 7,800.

I would like to thank our partners at Pratt and Whitney Canada for the company's role as a major employer in my riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton and, through their reinvestments in Ontario, for helping to make our great province even stronger.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I rise today to speak to the issue of wasteful spending on the part of the McGuinty government. Since taking office, the McGuinty Liberals have increased government spending by 70% while the economy grew by just 9%.

After eight years, Ontario families know better than to expect that Dalton McGuinty is capable of getting his tax-and-spend habit under control. Whether it's \$18 million for ad campaigns and legal fees for the botched delivery of the eco tax program or the billion-dollar

boondoggle at eHealth, Ontario families end up paying the price for this government's mismanagement.

Ontario families simply cannot afford to pay for waste and government they don't need. That's why PC leader Tim Hudak put forward a plan for dealing with waste on March 23 called the Agencies, Boards and Commissions Sunset Review Act. This legislation will require those government boards, agencies and commissions to make a business case before a legislative committee of elected MPPs to establish how it serves the public's interest and how it provides value for Ontario families. By contrast, the McGuinty government chose to do nothing until a couple of days before the budget, when they slapped together a commission at the last minute.

With next year's deficit estimated at \$16.3 billion and faced with \$10.3 billion in annual interest payments on this record debt, the Ontario government owes it to families to get waste under control. Tim Hudak and the Ontario PCs have a plan to get the waste under control. Ontario families deserve nothing less.

BOB MACKENZIE

Mr. Paul Miller: In January, the people of Ontario, but particularly those from Hamilton East, lost a long-serving, strong advocate for workers and all citizens for whom he made working life better as the Minister of Labour from 1990 to 1994. Former Hamilton East MPP Bob Mackenzie served in the 31st to 35th Parliaments, from 1975 to 1995—a long and distinguished service.

During his time as Minister of Labour, Ontario workers made great strides on pay equity, on labour rights, on workplace standards, and significantly today, as Minister of Labour, he brought in the legislation to ban replacement workers during strikes. Mackenzie was 82 when he passed away, and remained an NDP and Hamilton icon, a man of great integrity and passion.

Through the hustle and bustle of life in the Legislature, when sometimes dignity, decorum and basic courtesy are pushed aside, Bob Mackenzie remained committed to his work, his constituents and his ideals, and he never lost the core man and decent, honest, sincere, hard-working representative of his constituents and all Ontarians.

On behalf of our shared constituents and all Ontarians, I extend to Bob Mackenzie's family our sincere condolences on his passing, but more importantly, our thanks for his years of devoted service to public life.

AL HEBBURN

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I rise in the House today to honour and remember Mr. Al Hebburn, who recently passed away. He was 94 years old.

Mr. Hebburn, a veteran of World War II, first enlisted on September 4, 1939, with the Royal Canadian Artillery, 4th Field. As a private, he fought in the battle of Dieppe and landed on Juno Beach as a sergeant with the Royal Regiment of Canada just after the June 6 D-Day land-

ings. On October 30, 1945, he received an honourable discharge, returning home to start a family and build a new life.

In 1960, Mr. Hebburn became a member of the Mount Dennis Legion, Branch 31, in York South-Weston. He later joined the executive, and in 1970 became branch president, serving four terms. Becoming a life member of the Legion, Mr. Hebburn was also presented with a Meritorious Service Medal to honour his tremendous contribution.

1310

On behalf of the community and those who had the pleasure of knowing, working with and learning from Mr. Hebburn, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to him and so many other veterans for their courage and the sacrifices made to protect our values and our country. I ask members of this House to join me in sending our thoughts and prayers to his family, friends, and so many others who were fortunate to know him.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I rise today in support of Bill 168, the Agencies, Boards and Commissions Sunset Review Act, put forward by our leader, Tim Hudak.

One of the core principles of our democracy is that elected members of Parliament are responsible for overseeing public finances. Continuing that long tradition, Bill 168 would establish a committee of this Legislature and entrust it with a mandate to review all agency spending. This committee would be free to recommend that we keep what works, fix what needs fixing, and scrap what is no longer working in the interests of Ontario families.

We in this chamber have a solemn responsibility to ensure Ontario taxpayers receive good value for their tax dollars. To hand off this task to someone who is unelected and unaccountable would be an abdication of our responsibility. The people of Ontario have put their trust in us, and we in the PC caucus are here every day, fighting to give Ontario families the respect they deserve.

It is only right that Bill 168 become law and we get this committee up and running so we can find the best value for taxpayers. I commend our leader, Tim Hudak, for introducing this initiative, and I will be supporting it this afternoon. I hope that the members opposite will act on their responsibility to their constituents and do the same.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Rick Johnson: Back in October, I spent a day in my riding with the Honourable Minister of Children and Youth Services. One of our visits was to the Point in Time Centre for Children, Youth and Parents.

Point in Time is a not-for-profit organization that promotes the well-being of children, youth and parents in Haliburton county. They are passionate about identifying and supporting children and youth with mental health needs. They know there comes a point in time where any

parent may have trouble managing their child's behaviours, any child may feel overwhelmingly sad, angry or anxious, or any teen may feel that they are near the end of their rope. They also know that together we can do more. We can—and we are.

Last week's budget announced \$257 million over three years aimed at child and youth mental health. In response, Marg Cox, the executive director of Point in Time, said this: "We are thrilled that the government is putting significant resources behind their commitment to addressing child and youth mental health needs across the province and in Haliburton county."

With one in five children and youth experiencing mental health challenges and 70% to 80% of mental illness appearing before the age of 18, there is a huge need for increased mental health supports. In our community, we are hoping that additional resources in this sector will help reduce wait times and allow more children, youth and families to receive the help they need.

I thank Minister Broten for really listening to the professionals at Point in Time, and I thank Marg Cox for her advocacy, because she is right: The point in time is now.

JOHN ARNOLD TORY

Mr. Mike Colle: The city of Toronto, the province of Ontario and Canada have lost a true humanitarian and business icon, John Arnold Tory, who passed away last week and left an amazing legacy of philanthropy, achievement and mentorship.

This quiet, unassuming family man will be very much missed by his wife of 58 years, Liz, his four children, including his son John, who sat with us here in the Legislature as the Leader of the Opposition, and his 15 grandchildren.

On behalf of all of us in the Legislature, the Premier of Ontario, the Honourable Dalton McGuinty, and all Ontarians, we extend our deepest sympathy to the family. We will truly miss his incredible, tireless generosity.

John A. Tory was an incredible, powerful force. He helped guide two remarkable Canadian success stories that are second to none: the late Ted Rogers, pioneer of Rogers Communications, and the legendary Ken Thomson, another incredible Canadian. Many of their outstanding accomplishments of international prominence were because of the behind-the-scenes wise and astute mentorship of John A. Tory.

Mr. Tory's life was dedicated to building and improving his country and community. There is no better evidence of this dedication than at Toronto's Sunnybrook Hospital. His and his family's generosity established the Tory Regional Trauma Centre at Sunnybrook and the John and Liz Tory Eye Centre at Sunnybrook, which, by the way, was built because of a donation of \$7 million from his long-time friend and associate, Ted Rogers.

Mr. Tory was also tireless in his support of the Art Gallery of Ontario, and he went above and beyond in his dedication to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

John A. Tory led by example with his quiet, forceful and wise determination to make life better for his fellow Canadians. May his relentless philanthropy and focus on family and community be an example for all of us to follow. No one can deny that all of us are in a better place because of the lasting contribution this great Canadian has made to his fellow man.

ARMY CADETS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's my pleasure to welcome again today a delegation of Royal Canadian Army Cadets and the Army Cadet League of Canada, Ontario division, to Queen's Park.

I'm proud to see representatives from around the province, and particularly welcome the visitors from my riding of Northumberland—Quinte West and my hometown of Brighton, which now hosts the newest branch of the Army Cadet League of Ontario, which became operational in September 2010.

I'd like to thank Don McCumber, chair of the Vimy kickoff committee, and the rest of the team for their hard work to set up this memorable event. I look forward to joining them at future ceremonies for years to come.

The army cadets from across Ontario are here today to hold the first-ever army cadet commemoration of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, April 9, 1917, one of the most significant events of World War I. The Honourable David Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, is joining the Royal Canadian Army Cadets and Army Cadet League of Canada, Ontario division, in a wreath-laying ceremony as we speak, outside at the Ontario veterans' memorial wall.

This formal declaration and proclamation at Queen's Park today marks the first of such events and is expected to be an annual event replicated by army cadet corps throughout Ontario from this year onward.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): As ordered on March 30, this House is now adjourned during pleasure for an address by the ambassador of Japan to Canada.

HIS EXCELLENCY KAORU ISHIKAWA

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Your Excellency, as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the Legislature today on behalf of all the members of provincial Parliament, legislative staff, and invited and distinguished guests.

Today marks the first time in 25 years that an international dignitary has addressed our provincial Legislature at pleasure, although this historic event comes as a result of a time of great sadness for your people.

1320

The earthquake and tsunami of Friday, March 11, 2011, were disasters that brought about unprecedented catastrophe to your great nation. The world watched in shock and horror as we witnessed the aftermath of these terrible events. It is unthinkable to consider that once again today, there is news of yet another significant

earthquake off the shores of Honshu, and yet again we hold our breath.

Your Excellency, I know that the hearts of all of us here and, indeed, those of all Ontarians are with the people of Japan at this time of crisis. The bonds between your country and our province are strong. We are good friends, and we value our relationships.

In 1848, Ranald MacDonald, who had been living in my home community of St. Thomas, became the first teacher of English in Japan.

In 2005, as a symbol of the friendship and goodwill between us, three Japanese flowering cherry trees were planted on the grounds of the Ontario Legislature, and I can see them from just outside my office window. Soon, these trees will offer us their beautiful blossoms as the warmer weather arrives. Symbolically, Your Excellency, know that all of us at the Ontario Legislature will be thinking of these flowers as a sign of hope for Japan in the face of the difficult weeks and months that lie ahead.

Your Excellency, I will now ask you to please honour this assembly with your address.

His Excellency Kaoru Ishikawa: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Premier, the distinguished leaders of the opposition parties, elected members of the Ontario provincial Parliament, ladies and gentlemen:

I would like to thank you most sincerely for giving me the great honour and privilege to speak to you in this magnificent symbol of democracy, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

There truly is no place like Ontario, with its beautiful parks and bustling cities. It comes as no surprise that Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan were enchanted by the warmth and hospitality of Ontarians and Canadians during their visit in the summer of 2009.

Ontario also has a very special place in my heart as I think back to the wonderful summer holiday of 1968 when I visited this very city, Toronto. During that time—and forgive me for breaking the rules to speak about something personal—my father had the privilege of serving as the consul general of Japan. I took my first driving licence here in Toronto. My family always had very fond memories of this beautiful province.

Today, I am tremendously fortunate to return as ambassador of Japan, and I would like to share with you the latest developments occurring in my country, as well as my hope for the future of Japan-Canada and Japan-Ontario relations.

Today, my country faces its largest challenge in modern history. Over four weeks ago, a powerful earthquake and tsunami led to an unimaginable toll of death and destruction.

Before I address the details of this disaster, allow me to offer my deep gratitude to all Canadians and Ontarians who have given us heartwarming messages of sympathy and condolence. From His Excellency the Right Honourable Governor General David Johnston, the Right Honourable Prime Minister Stephen Harper, His Honour the Honourable Lieutenant Governor David Onley, the Honourable Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Honourable

Speaker Mr. Steve Peters to the countless number of residents from across Canada and Ontario, I want to take this moment to say thank you. I also would like to mention that I had the privilege of meeting with the honourable Premier after the disaster took place, and his words were very moving.

Indeed, the words, thoughts and prayers of all Canadians have not gone unnoticed. They have created hope and strength for the people of Japan as they rebuild and move forward. For the second time since the end of the Second World War—and actually for the second time in our 2,000 years of history—His Majesty the Emperor of Japan addressed his people in a televised speech, offering encouragement and hope, as well as expressing his deep gratitude for the assistance provided by friends and allies, including Canada.

On March 11, Japan was struck by a 9.0 magnitude earthquake, the highest ever observed in my country. A tectonic plate shift 500 kilometres long and 200 kilometres wide led to powerful and violent tsunamis which created waves as high as 40 metres, their effects further amplified by a sawtooth coastline adjacent to steep mountains with countless villages and municipal offices. We swallow with difficulty the fact that these villages and offices no longer exist. This has made it extremely challenging to assess the damage and to receive and host rescue and assistance teams from our friends and allies.

With many of the roads, bridges, railroads and sea-ports no longer functioning, a US navy aircraft carrier was deployed almost immediately after the disaster. This carrier has served as a base for Japan's Self-Defense Forces and emergency response helicopters as they continue to search and rescue residents in the affected areas.

In addition to the countless lives lost and the many more who have no shelter, the disaster has also had an impact on the Fukushima nuclear power plants. While the reactors automatically shut down after the earthquake—and that is the difference between Chernobyl and Fukushima—the more-than-14-metre-high waves of the tsunami virtually destroyed the reactors' cooling systems, a critical aspect of nuclear safety.

Today, we are still struggling to cool down the reactors. It seems as though every time we make progress and take two steps forward, we face yet another unpredictable challenge and take one step back. Nevertheless, the government—with the assistance of nuclear energy experts both within and outside Japan—is continuing to make utmost efforts to resolve this situation. With this challenge, we have seen the incredible bravery and resolve of the so-called "Fukushima 50," an initial group of 50 that has now grown to more than 450 engineers and technicians who have courageously stayed behind to stabilize the reactors and assess the damage and radiation levels at the plant.

The situation concerning the Fukushima reactors has led to many discussions with regard to nuclear energy. Although our priority at this time is to address the situation, undoubtedly our government—and presumably the global community at large—will need to examine the

lessons learned from this situation and advance toward more robust nuclear safety. During his visit to Japan on March 31, His Excellency Mr. Nicolas Sarkozy, the President of France and the chair of this year's G8 and G20, acknowledged a need for further discussions on this matter during a bilateral meeting with Japan's Prime Minister, His Excellency Mr. Naoto Kan.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize and appreciate the offers of assistance by the government of Canada. In fact, 25,000 Canadian thermal blankets have been sent to Japan and are now being delivered to evacuees. These blankets will prove to be invaluable to the displaced victims of the affected region, where the winter is as cold as yours. Furthermore, we have just received radiation survey meters and dosimeters from Canada to assist with our nuclear emergency response efforts in Fukushima. Dosimeters are radioactivity-detecting devices that each technician can put on when they go down to the nuclear power station.

Canadians—among them many Ontarians—have also given generously through the Canadian Red Cross. Many cities are hosting fundraisers and awareness events. Corporations and organizations have also donated significantly to the relief efforts. Members of the media have worked tremendously hard to relay the latest news of the disaster, and this has been invaluable to the many Japanese residents in Canada and to Canadians who have family and friends residing in Japan.

The small and large acts of all Canadians, spanning all generations, are extraordinary. One notable example is of an eight-year-old boy from Halifax whose father drove him all the way to Ottawa so that he could personally deliver 1,400 paper cranes, birds, which he folded with his classmates. Each paper crane had a special message to the people of Japan, and the boy's own message contained his wish for "the people of Japan to not lose hope and that they know that we care." Traditionally, groupings of 1,000 paper cranes serve as a symbol of prayer and encouragement to the Japanese people, but in this particular case, they had indeed a much deeper and profound meaning. I was very, very touched.

1330

The reaction of Canada and Ontario to the situation in Japan may come as no surprise to some, as our two countries have shared a rich history of partnership and co-operation, just as His Honour mentioned. I would like to touch briefly on this relationship, first from an economic perspective.

Many of you may have heard the term "lost decade" used to describe the economic downturn that Japan faced during the 1990s. While there are still many economic and social issues that need to be addressed domestically, I want to shed some light on the positive aspects of this decade.

While, indeed, heavy and bulk industries lost their competitive edge during this time, many new industries were born in Japan and grew very rapidly during this period. Most notably, mobile telecommunications grew 60% per year; the development of liquid crystal displays,

35% per year; fibre optics, 20%; personal computers, 18%; and the list goes on.

When we look even closer at individual companies, we are able to see innovation in action during this lost decade. For example, we observed the resurrection of light industry companies such as textile makers, who transformed themselves to become high-tech companies.

All of this to say that the term "lost decade" is irrelevant when it comes to the economic relationship between Japan and Ontario. Most notably, Japanese automakers such as Toyota and Honda have made investments in Ontario. They produce over 740,000 cars yearly, which, in turn, has created 65,000 jobs in this province. In fact, the total export value of these vehicles manufactured in Canada amounts to more than \$12 billion annually. Furthermore, over 240 Japanese companies have chosen to invest in Ontario, thanks to the long-standing support of the government of Ontario for this type of investment.

This province is also home to many technological breakthroughs and innovative products. I, myself, use a BlackBerry, one of the best products in the world, created right here in Ontario. It is interesting to note that, within the BlackBerry, we can see our economic partnership at work, with Japanese companies such as Sanyo and Anritsu supplying critical components to the production of this device.

While there are worries that the supply of some Japanese-made components will be affected by the recent disaster, I am pleased to share with you that many factories have restarted their production lines, according to the Japan Auto Parts Industries Association.

Indeed, we—120 million Japanese citizens—firmly believe that the only way to overcome this challenge is to conduct the task at hand with the best of our abilities, with no sensation or panic, but with steady and firm determination, conviction and hope.

Speaking of hope, we know that science and technology are the only ways for our country to move forward, and there are many examples of scientific and technological co-operation between Japan and Ontario.

If I can cite a few examples: The University of Toronto's Institute of Biomaterials and Biomedical Engineering and Kyoto University's Center for iPS Cell Research and Application have worked together to make progress on stem cell research, and the National Institute for Materials Science of Japan and Waterloo University have been promoting their collaboration on nanotechnology since the signing of a partnership agreement in February 2010.

I'm also very proud to note that eight Japanese scientists have had the honour of being awarded the Gairdner Award. Recently, on March 23, it was announced that Dr. Shizuo Akira of Osaka University would be one of seven recipients for this year, 2011.

On a broader scale, allow me to touch briefly on the partnership between Japan and Canada. One such example of this partnership took place very recently on January 27, 2011, when a Japanese-built and launched unmanned cargo spacecraft successfully docked with the

International Space Station with the assistance of the Canadian-built Canadarm2 in space. Many of you may have seen this spectacular occurrence broadcast on CBC TV news.

This event is simply one of many which symbolize the potential of our economic and technological partnership. In February of this year, both Japan and Canada agreed to launch a joint study on an economic partnership agreement. Both parties held their first meeting for this study in March, and a second meeting is scheduled to take place next week.

Japan and Canada will also launch its first sub-cabinet level dialogue on political, peace, and security co-operation in August. Both initiatives will be invaluable pillars in mobilizing our bilateral relations to the next phase of collaboration.

As ambassador, I am very proud to see our country advance with Canada on these fronts, promoting free trade in accordance with the World Trade Organization and establishing a prime example of two free market and open economies and societies working hand in hand. My humble belief is that this is made possible by the fact that both countries have a long history of participatory democracy, freedom of speech and expression, and legal predictability; the latter which I believe is a crucial element for the success of our multi-faceted relationship.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to reassure all members of this Legislative Assembly that I will spare no efforts to ensure the success of this collaboration between Japan and Canada, and needless to mention, Japan and Ontario.

In addition to our economic partnership, I believe it is very important to note the cultural exchange that occurs between our two countries.

Most notably, there has been an increase in the number of Japanese students who come to Canada. In fact, 220 academic co-operation agreements between Japanese and Canadian universities are actively engaged.

Over 7,000 Canadians have also participated in the JET Programme—the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme—a Japanese government initiative aimed at creating grassroots exchanges and relationships between Japan and Canada—mainly inviting them as English teachers and dispatching them to various towns and villages throughout Japan.

Toronto is home to the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre. Led by President Mr. Gary Kawaguchi and Executive Director Mr. James Heron, the centre is an incredible symbol of multiculturalism and highlights the role of Japanese Canadians in this country. It serves as a gathering place for not only Japanese Canadians, but also many other ethnic communities as they seek to explore the roots of their cultures.

On April 9, the centre will host the third annual Sakura Ball, a highlight of which is the Sakura Award, recognizing exceptional contributions made by individuals to the promotion and exchange of Japanese culture and enhancing awareness of Japanese heritage within Canada and abroad. The recipient of this year's Sakura Award is Dr. David Suzuki.

Mr. Speaker and elected representatives of the people of Ontario, the recent earthquake and tsunami have shown all of us the incredible power of Mother Nature. More importantly, it has taught us the need to seek a balance between nature and mankind.

As ambassador, I am confident that the people of my country will move forward, recover from this hardship and rebuild once again to become the vibrant economic and cultural centre of Asia. However, as we rebuild, we must never forget the most vulnerable generation affected by this tragic disaster. For the children who have lost their homes—and in many cases, those who have lost their parents—it is my personal appeal for our government and all of our friends and neighbours to offer them support and, like the message written by the boy from Halifax, let them know that they are not alone.

Please allow me to say once again, thank you. The support, generosity and solidarity of the members of this Legislative Assembly, all Ontarians and all Canadians will never be forgotten. Thank you very much, indeed.

1340

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I call on the Premier of the province of Ontario.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Ambassador Ishikawa, Ishikawa-san, yokoso oide kudasai mashita.

On behalf of the people of Ontario, welcome to our Legislature. We are honoured by your presence here today. This, as you have heard, is a very special event for us. The last time a foreign dignitary addressed this House was 25 years ago. Japan has paid us a similar honour in the past. A couple of years ago, I had the honour to meet with Emperor Akihito, and he told me his very first official overseas visit as crown prince was to Canada in 1953. That visit and your presence here today speak to the special relationship that we have with Japan.

Je veux que vous sachiez qu'au moment même où vous vivez le deuil de tous ceux et de toutes celles qui ont perdu la vie lors de ce tremblement de terre et de ce tsunami, les Ontariens et Ontariennes sont de tout coeur avec vous. Your Excellency, I want you to know that as you mourn and remember all those who lost their lives in the earthquake and tsunami, Ontarians stand with you. We stand with you in your sorrow, and we stand with you as you continue to rebuild. In countless Ontario homes, our families have you in their prayers, and we think of your families and all that they have endured. We see you overcoming tragedy, as you have for centuries, and it inspires us. It also enlightens us. It gives us a glimpse into the soul and character of the Japanese people, a people who have endured and overcome tremendous hardship countless times over your long and rich history.

Japan is a country of great natural beauty: The snow-capped peak of Mount Fuji, the clear water of Lake Mashu and the grandeur of the Nachi Falls have all inspired centuries of reverence and awe. Your country has also known great natural catastrophes: earthquakes, volcanoes, tsunamis. While western culture sees beauty and destruction as forces to be reconciled, Japanese

culture sees them as a paradox to be embraced. Each gives the other a deeper, richer meaning. And when you meet the people of Japan, as I have been fortunate to do both as host and as a guest in your country, one begins to appreciate the way you see beauty and purpose and paradox.

The revered Japanese poet Basho wrote: "The moon and sun are travellers through eternity. Even the years wander on. Whether drifting through life on a boat or climbing toward old age leading a horse, each day is a journey, and the journey itself is home."

You embrace the journey; you draw strength from it, which is why today from desperate suffering we see a steely resolve rising. Nous avons confiance que vous vous en sortirez encore plus fort même si vous êtes en deuil et que vous faites votre devoir de mémoire. We know you will endure this tragedy. We have faith you will emerge stronger even as you mourn and remember.

Today, Your Excellency, we want you to know that Ontarians stand with the people of Japan. We also want you to know that we stand in awe of you. We stand in awe of your remarkable courage. We stand in awe of your enduring spirit. We are proud and honoured to be your friends.

As you heard a moment ago, outside in front of this building stand three cherry trees donated to the people of Ontario by the people of Japan. After a long, cold winter, they will soon come into bloom and they will be beautiful. I can think of no more fitting symbol because, after a time of great sorrow, Japan's spirit will emerge again as it always has: beautiful, strong, full of new life and always with hope. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The leader of the official opposition.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you, Speaker.

I would like to thank His Excellency Kaoru Ishikawa, the ambassador of Japan to Canada, for speaking to us here in the assembly today.

On behalf of my colleagues in the Ontario PC caucus, I would like to offer our deepest sympathy and condolences to the people of Japan and their families. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the courageous Japanese people and their families and friends here in Ontario and elsewhere throughout the world.

All of us who shared in watching the horrific images of the devastation on March 11 of the earthquake and tsunami have no doubt shared in that great sense of loss with the people of Japan. We'll never forget the images of homes destroyed, communities vanished, lives lost, families ripped apart—an entire nation left to grapple with utter devastation. It will leave an indelible image in all of our minds forever.

I would be remiss if we did not mention the tremendous efforts undertaken by Japanese officials, the Fukushima 50, showing limitless courage and dedication to the people of Japan by staying behind and coping with nuclear facilities damaged by the catastrophe. I cannot imagine what those folks and their families are going through and the sacrifice they are prepared to make to help their families and their country.

But out of such loss we have also seen incredible courage, the remarkable strength to battle against the odds, to pull together, to recover and to rebuild. Personally, I was struck by the words of Japanese Emperor Akihito, speaking to his people with a message that was heard throughout the world. The emperor said, "I hope from the bottom of my heart that the people will, hand in hand, treat each other with compassion and overcome these difficult times." He then called on his people not to abandon hope. His message was heard not only throughout Japan, but here in Ontario.

That message is certainly being taken to heart here in our Legislature, where we welcome the ambassador to speak before us—as mentioned, the first address by a foreign dignitary in 25 years. That reflects the level of respect we have for the ambassador and the people of Japan, who are still grappling with the devastating impact of the Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami, and that respect has been strengthened, forged by the deep roots and connections between Japan and the people of Ontario.

A dozen cities and towns in our province have sister cities in Japan. Our economic connections are vast and growing stronger: a trading partner in our manufacturing and automotive industries, significant. I know my colleagues Mr. Wilson and Mr. Hardeman welcome Honda and Toyota, and their communities know the impact that has on families in those parts of the province.

Throughout Ontario and Canada, communities have come together to, as the emperor said, work hand in hand with aid organizations to donate money and offer help as Japan recovers and rebuilds. Through the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre, Ontario has already raised significant funds to assist in the recovery efforts.

As we all know, it will take more than money for Japan to come back. Families will need time to deal with the sense of loss, to grieve loved ones. And that's the reason I was very impressed by another special initiative by the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre. The origami crane project for Toronto schoolchildren has had kids make paper cranes and send them to the children of Japan. The crane represents good fortune and longevity in Japanese culture, and with origami versions, Toronto schoolchildren are sending notes of best wishes to children whose lives have been torn apart by the tsunami. This community-building project allows for our two countries to build even more lasting bonds, to let the children of Japan know that despite the devastation in their country and, sadly, the loss of family, they are not alone in the world—in fact, far from it. Their friends in Ontario are there for them.

I am confident that Japan, as they have done before, will rebuild once again, grow stronger still and will recover from these devastating events. I'd like to say to the ambassador that he can take heart, as can the Japanese people, that your friends in Ontario will be with you every step of the way.

1350

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: On behalf of my NDP caucus colleagues and all Ontario New Democrats, I want to welcome Your Excellency Ambassador Ishikawa here to the Legislature today and acknowledge your powerful and evocative message on what's happening in your country even as we speak, as well as acknowledging your detailing of the many areas of collaboration that Ontario, Canada and Japan enjoy.

I want to offer our condolences and deepest sense of regret for what your country and its people have endured. Like all Ontarians, I'm certain, I was overwhelmed by the images coming out of Japan in the wake of the earthquake and tsunami. They were images of unimaginable destruction and immense human suffering. This really is a tragedy of monumental proportions.

I want to tell you, Your Excellency, that all Ontarians are here for our Japanese friends. As the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition have stated, Ontario treasures its relationship with Japan and the Japanese people. It's a friendship that stretches across the globe. Toronto may be almost 9,000 kilometres away from Tokyo, but the ties we've forged—cultural, economic and, yes, political—are as strong as ever, and the contribution Ontarians of Japanese ancestry have made to our province in all facets of life is enormous. That is why we will do whatever we can to help Japan rebuild.

We are comforted in knowing that Japan is a proud and resilient nation. The Japanese people have overcome tremendous tragedies in the past and they will do so again. That resiliency is woven into the Japanese DNA and it will serve you, Your Excellency, and your people well during the rebuilding and rebirth that is under way.

The days, weeks, months and years ahead will no doubt present great challenges and equally great opportunities. I want you to know that Ontarians will be with you every step of the way. That, sir, you can definitely count on us for.

I want to close with a Japanese proverb that captures this moment in human history: *Keizoku wa chikara nari*—perseverance is strength. The Japanese people shall persevere and they shall be immeasurably stronger for it.

Thank you, Your Excellency, for gracing us with your presence today. *Domo arigato.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Your Excellency, on behalf of all members of this Legislature and the people of Ontario, we want to thank you for honouring us today with your presence and your words. I want to thank the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the third party for their words as well.

I'd ask all members and all of our guests to rise as we observe a minute of silence for those victims of the March 11 earthquake and tsunami.

The House observed one minute's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like to extend an invitation to all members and all of our guests to join us for a reception in honour of His Excellency's visit to the Legislative Assembly today. The reception will be taking place in the Speaker's apartment, located on the third floor in the northwest corner of the building, and I would ask that you all please join us.

Your Excellency, thank you very much for the presentation today, and our hearts and prayers go out to the people of Japan.

His Excellency Kaoru Ishikawa: Thank you very much again for this great honour and the kind words that Mr. Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, the leader of the third party and all of the members of this Legislature have kindly sent to my people through me. I thank you very much again.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL
PARKWAY ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LA PROMENADE
ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL

Mr. Levac moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 178, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act to name Highway 403 the Alexander Graham Bell Parkway / *Projet de loi 178, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun afin de nommer l'autoroute 403 promenade Alexander Graham Bell.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Dave Levac: From the explanatory note: The bill amends the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act to name a portion of Highway 403 between Brant and Burlington the Alexander Graham Bell Parkway.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding meeting times for the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that the Standing Committee on General Government be authorized to meet at the call of the Chair on Wednesday, April 13, 2011, for the purpose of consideration of Bill 151, An Act to enact the Ontario Forest Tenure Modernization Act, 2011 and to amend the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

1400

PETITIONS

DOG OWNERSHIP

Mrs. Julia Munro: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

“Breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

“Problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners’ Liability Act (2005) and to implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types.”

As I’m in agreement, I have affixed my signature to give it to page Jimmy.

RURAL SCHOOLS

Mr. Jim Wilson: “Petition to Save Duntroon Central Public School and All Other Rural Schools in Clearview Township:

“Whereas Duntroon Central Public School is an important part of Clearview township and the surrounding area; and

“Whereas Duntroon Central Public School is widely recognized for its high educational standards and intimate learning experience; and

“Whereas the framework of rural schools are different from urban schools and therefore deserve to be governed by a separate rural school policy; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised during the 2007 election that he would keep rural schools open when he declared that, ‘Rural schools help keep communities strong, which is why we’re not only committed to keeping them open—but strengthening them’; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty found \$12 million to keep school swimming pools open in Toronto but hasn’t found any money to keep rural schools open in Simcoe–Grey;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Education support the citizens of Clearview township and suspend the Simcoe County District School Board ARC 2010:01 until the province develops a rural school policy that recognizes the value of schools in the rural communities of Ontario.”

I agree with this petition, and I will sign it.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Toby Barrett: “Haldimand–Norfolk Needs an OSPCA Chapter”:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the establishment of a local Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) could help deal with the brutality and neglect of horses and other large animals; and

“Whereas the Ontario government could provide training for the Ontario Provincial Police to deal with animal abuse issues;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that the Ontario government request the establishment of an OSPCA chapter in Haldimand–Norfolk to provide the two counties with support in cases of animal abuse and neglect.”

I agree with these petitions and include my signature with them.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas soaring hydro costs across the province are making electricity unaffordable for many hard-working Ontario families and seniors;

“Whereas energy experts suggest that over the course of 2010 and 2011 residential hydro bills in Ontario will increase 26% or more, costing a minimum of \$304 per year for the average homeowner;

“Whereas, over the last year alone, the McGuinty Liberal government has added” another “\$150 per household in hydro generation premiums, \$50 in smart meter fees and then placed” another “\$98 in harmonized sales taxes on the average Ontario household’s hydro bill;

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty’s smart meters are forcing hard-working and busy Ontarians to pay exorbitant premiums to do regular chores, such as laundry, outside of the Premier’s ‘preferred’ time-of-use energy schedule;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the McGuinty Liberal government immediately reduce hydro rates for all Ontarians, cease with the time-of-use pricing and remove the HST tax placed upon electricity, as it is an essential service to hard-working Ontario families.”

I agree with this petition and send it down with Kiruthika.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I, too, have a petition here concerning the soaring hydro rates.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas soaring hydro costs across the province are making electricity unaffordable to many hard-working Ontario families and seniors;

"Whereas energy experts suggest that over the course of 2010 and 2011 residential hydro bills in Ontario will increase 26% or more, costing a minimum of \$304 per year for the average homeowner;

"Whereas, over the last year alone, the McGuinty Liberal government has added \$150 per household in hydro generation premiums, \$50 in smart meter fees and then placed \$98 in harmonized sales taxes on the average Ontario household's hydro bill;

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's smart meters are forcing hard-working and busy Ontarians to pay exorbitant premiums to do regular chores, such as laundry, outside of the Premier's 'preferred' time-of-use energy schedule;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the McGuinty Liberal government immediately reduce hydro rates for all Ontarians, cease with the time-of-use pricing and remove the HST tax placed upon electricity, as it is an essential service to hard-working Ontario families."

I affix my signature, as I agree with this petition.

HOME CARE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have a petition here addressed to the Parliament of Ontario and the minister responsible for seniors. It comes from the riding of Davenport, and I'm delighted to read it for you:

"Whereas seniors who are disabled and/or ill are presently suffering at home; and

"Whereas the cost of a caregiver on a monthly basis who looks after a senior in their own home is around \$1,200, including room and board; and

"Whereas the cost of taking care of someone at home is at least 10 times less than the cost of a hospital bed;"—imagine that—"and

"Whereas most seniors with disabilities and/or illness are crowding an already overburdened health care system;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, strongly request that a basic government subsidy be established (based on a doctor's evaluation) which will pay at least a minimum allowance for a caregiver.

"Seniors deserve to live at home as long and as independently as possible."

Since I agree with this petition, I'm delighted to sign it.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Robert Bailey: I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas PC MPP Bob Bailey has introduced a significant tax credit for farmers who donate agricultural goods to food banks, to help provide tax relief to farmers and assist local food banks; and

"Whereas stagnating economic growth and increasing unemployment over the last two years have strained the ability of food banks to support Ontario's most vulnerable citizens; and

"Whereas over 25 million pounds of fresh produce is disposed of or plowed back into Ontario's fields each year while local food banks across Ontario face an uphill battle as they struggle to assist those most in need; and

"Whereas PC MPP Bob Bailey's 'A Bill to Fight Hunger with Local Food' provides an inexpensive and common-sense solution to a critical problem for Ontario's most vulnerable;

"Whereas if the McGuinty Liberals truly support a healthy Ontario and wish to fight poverty, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should immediately" call and "pass MPP Bob Bailey's bill;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call MPP Bob Bailey's private member's bill, Bill 78, the Taxation Amendment Act (Food Bank Donation Tax Credit for Farmers), 2010, to committee immediately for consideration and then on to third reading and implementation without delay."

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature and send it down with Christopher.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here, and it's obvious that a great number of constituents from Oxford county also agree with the member from Sarnia-Lambton, because they have signed this petition. On their behalf, I would like to present it.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas PC MPP Bob Bailey has introduced a significant tax credit for farmers who donate agricultural goods to food banks, to help provide tax relief to farmers and assist local food banks; and

"Whereas stagnating economic growth and increasing unemployment over the last two years have strained the ability of food banks to support Ontario's most vulnerable citizens; and

"Whereas over 25 million pounds of fresh produce is disposed of or plowed back into Ontario's fields each year while local food banks across Ontario face an uphill battle as they struggle to assist those most in need; and

"Whereas PC MPP Bob Bailey's 'A Bill to Fight Hunger with Local Food' provides an inexpensive and common-sense solution to a critical problem for Ontario's most vulnerable;

"Whereas if the McGuinty Liberals truly support a healthy Ontario and wish to fight poverty, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should immediately pass MPP Bob Bailey's bill;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call MPP Bob Bailey's private member's bill, Bill 78, the Taxation Amendment Act (Food Bank Donation Tax Credit for Farmers), 2010, to committee immediately for consideration and then on to third reading and implementation without delay."

I thank you very much for the opportunity to read this into the record.

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PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

DOCTORS' DAY

Mr. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to move this resolution today—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Could you just read the resolution first, please?

Mr. Reza Moridi: I move that, in the opinion of this House, to recognize and applaud the many contributions that doctors make to the health and well-being of all Ontarians, who, in addition to providing front-line health care, also promote and encourage a healthy and active lifestyle, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario shall proclaim the 1st day of May as Doctors' Day in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Moridi, could you please read the resolution as written in the order paper? Just for the record.

Mr. Reza Moridi: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario shall proclaim the 1st day of May as Doctors' Day in Ontario to recognize and applaud the many contributions that doctors make to the health and well-being of all Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this House today to present you and my honourable colleagues with an initiative that is very close to my heart: the recognition and celebration of our doctors across our great province of Ontario by declaring May 1 as Doctor's Day. The recognition of this day was first brought to my attention by a good friend of mine, Dr. Larry Grossman, chief of staff of York Central Hospital, who is here today with us in the east public gallery.

York Central Hospital plays an integral part in increasing the quality of life in my riding of Richmond Hill. The physicians, nurses, technologists, technicians, management and staff have not only provided my constituents and residents of York region with good quality front-line health care, but they have also fought brave battles such as the H1N1 outbreak and the SARS pandemic.

Dr. Mark MacLeod and his team at the Ontario Medical Association, who are also here with us today, have also been very instrumental in assisting me and my staff in preparing this motion, and I would like to sincerely thank them at this time.

The definition of a doctor or physician has changed enormously throughout time. At various times through history, doctors have been viewed as gods, priests or even individuals with a profound link to magic. Doctors have evolved and adapted alongside the evolutionary timeline of human society.

The first instance of a doctor or healer was chronicled in cave paintings in what is now France. The paintings

were radio-carbon dated as far back as 27,000 years ago and depicted people using plants for medical purposes. This is the first recorded instance of what eventually developed into the first medical knowledge base passed down through tribes.

The practice of medicine as a skill evolved with the ancient Egyptians. A standard work called the Book of Thoth was developed and used by Egyptian doctors. It was a collection of rituals and natural treatments, including such religious practices as mummification, which helped these ancient doctors understand human anatomy. The Egyptians were one of the first peoples to develop a system of medical training in the temples and using written language, hieroglyphics.

This combination of religious and practical ideas was further developed by the ancient Greek medical doctors. The most influential was Hippocrates. It was his belief and teaching that took the idea of illness being caused by gods to the more modern understanding of illness being the result of the body's elements becoming out of balance. Hippocratic doctors were one of the first examples of people being trained in schools of medicine versus temples.

There are various historical figures with tremendous contributions to the world of medicine from all across the world: from Avicenna, whose book, *The Canon of Medicine*, which was used as a textbook in universities as late as 1650, was an unprecedented book for the discovery of contagious diseases, sexually transmitted diseases, the introduction of quarantine to limit the spread of disease, the introduction of experimental medicine, clinical trials, neuropsychiatry, among many other discoveries, to the books of Ontario doctors Dr. Frederick Banting and Dr. Charles Best and their discovery of insulin right next door at the University of Toronto.

Doctors throughout history have played not only a vital role in treatment and critical care, but also in increasing the life expectancy of patients.

After the development of sodium citrate in World War I, doctors were able to carry out blood transfusions without the need for the donor to be present. Harold Gillies and Archibald McIndoe developed plastic surgery during World Wars I and II. The 20th century also saw the first organ transplant. The first heart transplant was carried out by the South African surgeon Christiaan Barnard in 1967. Doctors were able to treat infertility in humans using IVF, the egg and the sperm being joined in the laboratory and then transplanted to the uterus, and in 1978, the first test-tube baby was born in the United Kingdom. The advances made by doctors in the 20th century enabled the treatment of almost any disease or medical problem.

I'd like to now share with you an inspirational story, the story of one of my constituents, Ms. Wendy Kumeta. In October 2009, alongside some other Ontarians, Wendy contracted H1N1 and was sent to York Central Hospital. The virus quickly took a turn for the worse and caused acute respiratory distress syndrome. She was transferred to the intensive care unit, where she was in a medically

induced coma. Her life was saved due to the quick thinking of her doctor, Dr. Eric Chu, and his staff at York Central Hospital. Dr. Chu placed her on a high-frequency oscillator, which in turn saved her life.

Wendy has now made a full recovery after her traumatic ordeal, and she owes this new lease on life to the physicians and the staff at York Central Hospital. Wendy says, "I had some of the best and most compassionate doctors, nurses and therapists. They were masking up, gowning up and coming into my room to save me when no one had a clue what (H1N1) would do."

Physicians are an integral component of Ontario's health care system. Every day, Ontario's doctors treat over 400,000 patients. Formally declaring May 1 as Doctors' Day is a chance for those patients to show their appreciation and gratitude to the 26,000 practising doctors across the province.

Thanks to the McGuinty government's strategic investments, Ontario doctors have helped more than 1.2 million people who previously did not have access to a family doctor. There are over 2,900 more physicians practising in the province of Ontario since 2003. There are more medical school spaces, and more physicians are choosing to become family doctors. By 2013, we will have doubled the number of doctors graduating from Ontario universities every year, from 533 to 1,064.

Ontario's doctors have also been working hard by performing more surgeries and helping reduce wait times for important procedures. In addition to providing front-line care, Ontario's doctors promote and encourage healthy and active lifestyles. Ontario's doctors continue to be leaders in the war against tobacco and fighting childhood obesity. Also, Ontario doctors successfully advocated for banning smoking in cars with children and eliminating texting while driving.

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Since 2004, Ontario doctors have treated over 30 million patients in emergency rooms, performed more than 775,000 cataract surgeries—close to a million—performed nearly 108,000 knee replacement surgeries, performed more than 70,000 hip replacement surgeries. Over 5,900 physicians have embraced electronic medical records, which covers nearly six million Ontarians.

May 1 was chosen as Doctors' Day in Ontario because it is the birthday of Dr. Emily Stowe. Dr. Emily Jennings Stowe was the first female physician in Canada. Like many other physicians of her time, it was a personal matter that drove her to medicine. Her husband contracted tuberculosis and, with several children to support, she decided to pursue medicine.

In 1865, at the University of Upper Canada in Toronto, it is reported that she was told by the dean, "The doors ... are not open to women and I trust they never will be."

In 1867, she graduated from the New York Medical College for Women and returned to Canada to practise, without an internship or residence.

Dr. Stowe's inspirational story is a beautiful example of the undying resilience of a person who entered the

field of medicine, not for personal gain, but to be an instrument for healing and the well-being of her community.

Currently, there are numerous physician appreciation events across the province at the municipal level. However, there is not one overarching event which celebrates all Ontario doctors. It may interest my colleagues to note that no Canadian provincial jurisdictions have legislation or have proclaimed any type of doctors' appreciation day.

The successful passing of this motion would once again put Ontario on the map as being the first province in this great country to recognize the tremendous contributions that doctors have made in our lives, by declaring May 1 as Doctors' Day.

I look forward to my honourable colleagues' support of this motion so that we may formally recognize and give thanks for the incredible work our doctors do every day in this great province of Ontario.

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Just a reminder to our guests that we welcome you to Queen's Park but you're not allowed to participate in any way in the proceedings, including clapping.

Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I stand and pay respect to the member from Richmond Hill's sentiments, and I commend him on his remarks. They were quite a tribute to the medical profession. Dr. Moridi is also a doctor. He's a Ph.D. doctor—in physics, I believe—and a very highly respected member of this Legislature. I'm surprised they aren't making better use of his talents in the innovation ministry or something like that.

Even in this Legislature today, there are members who have distinguished themselves outside of here as medical doctors. There is Dr. Qaadri here, of course. I hope he's going to be speaking later. There is Helena Jaczek, who is also a former medical officer of health. Kuldip Kular is a doctor, and there are more as well. Some of them are being well used as ministers, and Eric Hoskins is a good example. My point would be that they do serve the public and the public interest, in the sense of policy with knowledge.

The remarks made by the member from Richmond Hill summarize some of the reasons why he wants to put this motion forward, to celebrate May 1 as Doctors' Day in Ontario.

The Minister of Health, with all due respect, has a Ph.D., as well, from Western university. I'm not sure—it's probably political science; it certainly isn't health science. It's political science to the extent that she certainly knows how to handle the questions.

I really don't think there's a lot more to be added. I would say that I had the privilege, in a personal way, to be close to a family—my wife's sister and brother are both doctors. They went to McGill and McMaster. One is Dr. Norman Woods. He went to McGill, and he now practises in California and is very successful. If finance is the measure of success in medicine, he's made it. Other-

wise I'm not sure. I don't say that disparagingly, because he did practise here in Ontario for a while and was called to practise in California. I think he owns a Kellogg clinic, and he does provide some volunteer medical services in that area, because in the US, they have a different kind of system.

Georgia Woods, Peggy's stepsister, to be honest—they were her brother and sister, and they are, to the extent that they were together for many years.

The point I'm trying to make is, Georgia was quite different. She had a master of social work and worked with persons in need in the city of Toronto, and that was her calling. It was quite a different calling. She ended up practising in geriatrics—aging and the frail elderly. She's a very, very caring person and now practises, mostly in a locum situation, in Vancouver. She's a very artistic person but very skilled.

There's a certain thread that runs through it all: They really are both naturally caring people, and there must be some predisposed inclination, skills. I don't know what it is. When I think of our doctors in my own community, I'm always impressed with the people I meet with, because there are lots of issues with health care, plenty of them; in fact, if you want to think of it, all of us as members probably hear about issues in health care.

Right now, there are quite large changes in health care, and as I said earlier, I had the privilege at one time to be the Minister of Health's parliamentary assistant for a little bit of time with Elizabeth Witmer when she was the Minister of Health, and for the most part with Tony Clement when he was Minister of Health. I would also say that Tony Clement became the Minister of Health federally.

He was a lawyer; he wasn't a doctor. I've often wondered, when we have qualified medical people here, why don't they make them Minister of Health? Would it be a conflict? I'm not sure. Perhaps you could say in your response, but that would be the ultimate respect of the profession serving the profession as opposed to politicians serving the profession, because, as we know, we could rant on about this topic.

I'm sure that many of their patients are sometimes seen in a hurried fashion because of the lack of resources in health care. That's not one of my spin questions. It's a case that the doctors only have so much time to spend with each patient. In fact, the model, which has changed in some respects, is a good model, and that's the family health teams—collaborative health; the primary care option is very important. I think there's an expanding role, and I think it's being led by the Ontario Medical Association, dealing with the collaborative health model, dealing with nutritionists and pharmacists and all the other health care providers, and the emerging doctor-assist role for nurses. I don't know the formal name, but I think they're nurse practitioners.

The Speaker as well as a former Minister of Health. Mr. Wilson, you were very important. Right off the bat, you were the Minister of Health under some challenging circumstances as well. I believe we're kind of pioneers in

some of the attempts to reform medical delivery-of-service models so that they could be more efficient and more accessible to patients, as I recall some of the work you did in your time there.

I also say that it all comes back to your own personal experience. I have no personal dislike of doctors, but I sort of have the white-coat syndrome. If I go in, my blood pressure is up for sure. I would say that it's always important to pay attention to what you're doing.

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I would say that my own physician—I can put that on the record. I saw him just recently because I'm at that age where you should start watching out for yourself. Dr. Tony Stone is, I believe, the chief of medical staff at the Lakeridge Health regional health organization at the Bowmanville site—a very young, progressive, team-working doctor. I've met with him many times. During the time when our emergency was going to be shut down, he was actually the leader—and I don't mean this to be political. He made me fully understand the importance of having an internist as well as a family physician to actually facilitate keeping the emergency open, how important it was to have some of the specialists there to be available to make sure that the emergency could operate effectively and safely.

They are important to us because half of the budget of Ontario is basically health care, and with that, the responsibility is to spend the money wisely. It's important that collaborative health, in the future, is certainly one of the important methods to respect the medical team. Reflecting on this bill and the intent of it, I would put the doctors in charge of what the best solutions are to reorganizing the health system and the delivery of health care.

When I was looking through the clippings this morning, there were a couple of very important things. I think I'll just enter these as conversation pieces in the debate. I would say the first one was, "Time for an RHSP," a registered health savings plan. It made quite good sense, actually, when I listened to it, and I'd be interested in the views of doctors on this. It says here, "Individuals would deposit funds in a registered account that could be withdrawn tax-free for health care expenses approved and listed as deductions in the Income Tax Act."

I believe the real issue here is not queue-jumping or anything else, but providing services. Here's the key part to understand, because I see that the NDP are very quick to jump up and criticize this: "The deductible expenses would be those not covered by provincial insurance—among them"—this is very important—"dental care, prescription drugs, physiotherapy, prostate tests." The reason I say that is that these have been delisted as savings measures in health care. Physiotherapy was delisted. Do you understand? Somebody is being discharged from the hospital. There's a discharge plan by the doctor that would say that they must have therapy. If it's done in a hospital, it's my understanding that it is covered. If it's done in the community, it's not covered. Here they are with a broken hip—it's just not being

delivered properly. I would listen to the doctors, not the politicians.

Also, prostate tests: They're not covered. Screen testing for women was in the budget, \$15 million; nothing for prostate. The highest cause of death? Prostate. What does the physician community say? What does CIHI say? The Canadian Institute for Health Information collects that data. We need to have respect for the profession we're going to honour on May 1—I'm sure this will pass—and listen to what they have to say on some of this important stuff.

There's a lot on pharmacy, by the way. It's a huge issue; it probably will be in the election.

There was some stuff here under the Regulated Health Professions Act this morning. I would say this one here is quite interesting. This one here had to do with the change in scope of practice for some of our health care professions. I thought it was quite interesting, as we look at them working together. This actually went through the Regulated Health Professions Act. There are opticians, optometrists and ophthalmologists. They decided to give the opticians some of the stuff that only the medical doctor could do: prescribing medications for the eye. That is going to save an extra visit, save the system and actually improve access to care. I think this was led by Ms. Sullivan, I believe.

Again, doing what the professions in their own professional decisions decide is good for health care: We should be listening to them. That's the best way I can think of of respecting and recognizing the important contribution of Doctors' Day in our province of Ontario. They know that scarce resources need to be spent and used wisely.

With that, I suspect that we would be very supportive of this motion, and I appreciate the work you've put into it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, I've got to tell you, this is the kind of motion that comes up every now and then where you want to say, without debate, "All in favour? Opposed, if any?" and you move on, because that's the kind of motion we've got.

Doctors, as far as I know, are well liked and well respected—as far as I know. There could be some complaints, and I suspect there are, like any profession, but on the whole, it's a respected profession. But if the member from Richmond Hill feels that somehow they need to be recognized, God bless, let's recognize them.

I was thinking, if the motion read that "in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario shall proclaim the first day of May as Politicians' Day in Ontario, to recognize and applaud the many contributions that politicians make to the well-being of Ontarians," that would have been a good debate. Why? Because on the scale of who's loved and who's not, we are not up there. And if we did that and had that debate, it would make sense. Why? Because given that we are here by way of popular support, it would make sense that we would

stand up and talk about the great things we do for Ontarians.

But doctors? Good Lord. I mean, you guys are well respected as far as I know. Write me a note in case I'm wrong.

So I thought, what else do you say? My regular doctor, Claudio Borgono, is a good doctor. I like him a lot. He's a friend of the family. I even often consult some of my colleagues in this place—my good friend from Etobicoke North, my friend from the Oak Ridges moraine, from time to time, if needed.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I know. My Conservative colleague says the reason why we have a shortage of doctors out there is because they're in here, and he made a good point. It was a hell of a good point.

Mr. Frank Klees: Maybe October 6 will solve some of that.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: There are so many people who need your services out there. Now, I'm not saying you should reconsider your position. I'm not saying that, because if you like to be here, you should stay, for God's sake.

Mr. Frank Klees: Well, subject to—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: On the assumption that the people like them as much as I think they do. You don't know. Who knows?

The only thing I wanted to add quickly, because I know my colleague from Beaches—East York has got a few things to say as well—I thought, what could one talk about that is relevant to the profession? What's relevant to the medical students who want to be doctors is tuition fees. Now, there's an issue that one could move a motion around, where we commit ourselves to freezing the tuition fees for medical students, reducing them by 20% as quickly as we can, because we want a whole lot of young men and women to get into the profession. Given the kind of tuition fees that they have to face, more and more young men and women are saying, "I can't afford to do that."

Now, if that was the motion, I'd be saying I'm right there with you, right? Because we know that tuition fees are close to 20,000 bucks. We're just talking about tuition fees. Good God, ever since the Conservatives deregulated that field, a whole lot of people are just wondering where they're going to find the money to become doctors. Tories and Liberals say, "That's not so bad. It's a good profession. Once they become doctors, they'll be able to pay it off. Not a problemo."

But I say it's a big problemo. Now you know—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Member from Brant, you're saying, "Well, I don't know." But they deregulated and the Liberals have continued with that deregulation. Ah, I've got you now; gotcha.

In my humble view, there are a whole lot of people who don't come from rich families. If you come from a rich family, paying 20,000 bucks is not so bad, but if you come from a modest home like me, where my father was

a construction worker and my mamma worked at home, taking care of six kids—there isn't a whole lot of money there. But if mom and pop have some nice companies from which they make a whole lot of money, 20,000 bucks is nothing. But for a whole lot of regular folks out there, 20,000 bucks just for tuition fees, excluding books and excluding paying for rent—if you come from another city, that's a whole lot of money.

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If your family income is about 65,000 bucks or over, you get nothing. You get nothing from the government. In fact, because there is no OSAP, where do you go? You've got to go to the bank and right away start paying interest rates, as soon as you get that money.

So a lot of young men and women who decide they would like to get into that profession think, "Hmm. A \$100,000 debt at the end of my arduous journey to become a doctor: Can I afford to do that?" So there are some people who are deciding that's not the profession they want to get into. We are automatically excluding a whole lot of young men and women who would be capable of becoming doctors. If we had a motion to talk about that, I would be right there ready to get into that debate, as I'm trying to do. But I've got to leave time for my friend from Beaches—East York.

But, member from Richmond Hill, it's a nice motion. We like doctors. Let's recognize them, for sure.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Kuldip Kular: I would like to thank my honourable colleague the MPP from Richmond Hill for asking me to speak on behalf of his resolution to proclaim May 1 of each year as Doctors' Day in Ontario.

As a family physician and a legislator, I feel that I have been given the honour and privilege of serving Ontarians in two special ways. While there are many differences in these professions, both are essential to our way of life. In both cases, I am able to perform the role of an advocate for the public.

Each of us in this chamber wants an Ontario where our constituents benefit from a vibrant health care system. That system is, in the end, made up of human beings, many of them doctors who are dedicated to promoting the health of others in our society. Human beings are infinitely resourceful but also physically fragile. We become injured and sick. We grow old and frail. Sometimes even the strongest of us are struck down by illness.

It could be said that the thing we as Canadians enjoy most in life is not success or fame but our physical health. Our health is the thing that makes it possible for us to remain productive and to enjoy life. When we are healthy, we feel we can do anything.

While many people take their health for granted, doctors are never permitted to do so. I can tell you that being a family doctor is immensely rewarding and frequently challenging.

I remember when I was working as an emergency physician at Peel Memorial hospital. One of the evening shifts when I was doing that, one young man walked into

emerg. When he was insisting to see the physician, he slumped into his chair. He was brought in, and I was the emergency physician to examine him. He had a tiny stab wound in his chest. He was attending a birthday party where they had an argument, and he was stabbed in the chest. As I examined him, his blood pressure was low; his pulse was tiny and thready. I made the working diagnosis of cardiac tamponade. Within 12 minutes, he was taken to the operating room, where he had a rupture of his ventricle. It was stitched, he was hospitalized for some days, and he was sent home. Two years later, he walks into my medical office, bringing me a letter of appreciation thanking me, that if I hadn't been there and I didn't help him, he would not have been there anymore. A lot of my physician colleagues share similar incidents.

Certainly, the life of a doctor is not a vocation that should be pursued with a light heart. As doctors, we are often challenged to transform a patient's grim prognosis into something hopeful, and it cannot always be done. I believe that's why we need greater awareness of the role of doctors in our society. We need to recall their experiences and stories, both the virtues of the profession and its challenges, if people are to truly appreciate the importance of their health and of those who are entrusted to protect it.

Simply put, Ontario's strength will always be based upon the health of its people. It is people who make Ontario prosperous. People are the agents of change in our society, who transform ideas and resources into things that benefit others; into things that can be shared and traded to enrich our quality of life. People create great works of art and inspire us.

So physicians, as the ones who keep others healthy, are a special breed of person. It can be very humbling, especially for a young and inexperienced doctor, when a patient comes to you at their most vulnerable moment for help, or even with a relatively small but very personal health matter. There is often very little glory in confronting a patient's urgent medical needs. To each of us, at some point in our lives, these men and women will be heroes.

It is with these thoughts in mind that I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the chamber to support this resolution in order to remind Ontarians of the importance of their health and to encourage Ontarians from all walks of life to recognize Ontario's doctors for their essential role in our society. That's why I would request that members of both sides of the aisle should support the resolution brought forward by my honourable colleague the MPP for Richmond Hill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: Of course we're going to support the motion. My colleague from Trinity-Spadina already talked about the NDP's support for this, and we want to state at the outset that we applaud the many contributions made by doctors. We have no problem whatsoever with the concept of setting aside a special date for doctors.

I listened intently to the member from Richmond Hill as he talked about the Egyptians and the Hippocratic oath

and the development of medicine in ancient Greece. I know he is a scholar, and I know he would have wanted to say something about the huge advances that were made and continue to be made today in the Chinese culture and in the new world: All of the work that was done in the new world, much of which was lost at the time of colonization from the west.

But he left out, I think, one of the most important aspects, and that was what the Islamic world did in terms of medicine. Because when the great Greek texts of Hippocrates and Aristotle were lost to the western world, they were preserved in Islam, and it was there that all of this came back. People seem to forget that all of the strides that were made in medicine from the time of the Middle Ages on were as a result of what had taken place in Islam.

I think perhaps if he has two minutes, and I know he's a scholar on this, he might want to talk to everything from the invention of eyeglasses, everything from the first—I'll let him talk to it. He can talk to it, because there are some other things I want to say here today.

Of course we support the doctors and we understand where they fit in in the whole medical scheme. We also think that we need to, at the same time that we recognize the important role that doctors play, recognize that they don't do that in a vacuum. They do it with nurses, with dietitians, with technologists and myriad others who work in the medical field who are integral to making sure we have healthy lives.

The problem I have is not with recognizing the doctors, but I am curious as to why May 1 was chosen. In history—at least in Western history—this is not a day that one ought to say is for recognizing doctors. Today we know that May 1, throughout most of the world, is Labour Day. It's the day when you celebrate the people who work on the farms and the factories for the contribution they've made.

In fact, throughout most of the world, with the exception of the United States and Canada, that's precisely when that is. We do it on the first Monday in September; the rest of the world does it on May Day. But it has even older historical roots. Perhaps that's why Marx, when he talked about having a day to celebrate workers back in the 19th century, when he wrote about this, picked May Day. It was a celebration that was very old and very ancient in tradition and, I think, has nothing whatsoever to do with doctors.

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May Day was in Celtic times called Beltane. It was a time of horrendous destruction. If you see the old pictures, that's when they burned people alive, and I don't think doctors want to be associated with that. It also, in time, became the day of fertility, and you have the maypole and the dance around the maypole with all of the symbolism that invokes, and I'm not sure that doctors want to be equated with that. Perhaps the member can tell us why May 1 was chosen, because it seems somewhat bizarre to me that you would choose this day with what some people would say is barbaric and/or pagan influence.

When you look at it in terms of workers' rights around the world, it's certainly not because the doctors belong to some giant union, although I do admit they belong to a very successful one in terms of how they protect themselves. Is that why this was chosen? Or is it because doctors want to be seen as workers? Is it because doctors want to be seen in the older pre-Christian tradition of the Celtic and Druidic festival of Beltane? I'm not sure why this was chosen.

I do know that every May 1 in Britain, even to this day, they still light fires, they still go out into the woods, they still collect leaves and branches and bring them home in some places to celebrate this festival of fertility. It was, of course, banished in most of Europe during the 19th and early 20th centuries—they thought it was pagan; they thought it was a throwback—and those things really don't happen anymore, because of, I guess they thought, the anti-moral influence of the day.

I support the doctors. I support you all. I support what they do. I support everything, but I'm hoping my friend can explain to us why May 1. Perhaps—just perhaps—there is a better day than this to celebrate people who are universally respected in our culture, people who contribute so much to health and well-being, and not look upon a day to classify them either as mere workers or as some kind of influence or pagan festival that we're trying to renew. I'll leave it at that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: J'ai le plaisir maintenant de soutenir mon collègue, l'honorable député à l'Assemblée provinciale de Richmond Hill.

It's my privilege and honour to support my honourable colleague from Richmond Hill in this particular resolution.

I'd like to offer a few points, probably about half a dozen or so, some of which are polite and celebratory, some of which may be somewhat more aggressive. I hope, in toto, they will be received in the spirit they are given.

To begin, I would like to quote from the father of western medicine, Hippocrates, who wrote in the 4th century BC in Greece, "Life is short, the art so long, experience deceptive, judgment difficult, opportunity fugitive."

Of course, from a medical practitioner's perspective, that is the struggle, the agony and the ecstasy of the delivery of health care, whether it's in centuries past or even in the present context.

With that, I would like to also acknowledge the presence and the direction and guidance of the Ontario Medical Association, which is not only ably represented today by Dr. MacLeod and entourage, but also for their representation of the 26,000 physicians who deal and deliver and are really the stewards of health care in this province. As a proud member of the Ontario Medical Association myself, I will use that momentarily to speak a little bit of my own family background.

We've actually stopped counting the number of doctors in my family. It exceeds something on the order

of about 100. The running joke in my family is that we actually have more doctors than patients.

I would, with your indulgence and permission, Speaker, like to cite Dr. Qaadri, Sr., or Dr. M.K. Qaadri, my mother, who's a practising gynaecologist who was honoured by the Ontario Medical Association in 2008 as a life member, a founding member. Of course, we're quite busy now with the next generation, Dr. Shamsa and Dr. Shafiq Jr., who, by the way, both know how to actually give injections and have done so. They are now well on their way as pre-medical students, though they are, by the way, in grade 4 and grade 6, respectively.

Now, to move from my family, I would like to move for the moment to the Ontario family, once again acknowledging the extraordinary work of our colleagues who are dispersed throughout every village, every city, every hospital, every health care delivery facility across the province. We have treated, since 2004, more than 30 million patients in emergency rooms, and done almost 800,000 cataract surgeries, 110,000 knee replacements and 70,000 hip replacements. Those, of course, are statistics, are numbers which we need to be familiar with, but we as physicians on the ground, as part of our lived experience, are there actually managing not only the knees and the cataracts, but the people, and not only their humanity, but also their day-to-day concerns.

As Chair of the social policy committee, I would respectfully suggest to all who are listening to me, whether it's the government offices, our bureaucrats or others who may be listening, that it's probably important to have medical doctors, MDs, who actually know what they're doing in the health care field involved at all levels of decision-making. I can remember, for example, when we had to educate individuals in this chamber and throughout our government that when you're authorizing things like the H1N1 vaccine, that is a protection, a prophylaxis, to be given before the disease hits, not after. I remember that was a 15-minute debate that we had.

The other thing I would also say is that while we certainly welcome many, many Ph.D.s within the health care decision-making framework, including my colleague Dr. Moridi from Richmond Hill, I would simply say that Ph.D.s are nice but MDs keep it human.

I would also like to say that as we enlarge the health care team, of course physicians are very happy and encouraged to work with many members of the health care team, whether it's pharmacists or respiratory technicians or technologists, laboratory employees and so on, but I think there is an underlying ethos or philosophy, perhaps I would say, that somehow you can actually deliver health care without doctors. I can simply reassure you, or perhaps warn you, that that has been tried in many different jurisdictions and pilot programs across the world, and ultimately it doesn't hold.

I think there's another perhaps underlying philosophy that you can health-promote your way away from medical care. Physicians are the very first people to talk about lifestyle management, whether it's risk factor management, cholesterol, blood pressure, high salt, all the

elements of what we would call the cardiometabolic syndrome, but I would just simply add again a warning, an admonition that you are not going to be able to health-promote yourself away from medical care. That aspect needs to be fully funded and frontally managed, and not as a kind of afterthought.

I would simply conclude, Speaker, with your permission, by saying that the government has done its part. Something on the order of about 3,000 more physicians are now practising in the province of Ontario since we took our mandate in 2003.

I would conclude with my alma mater motto, and that is from the University of Toronto medical school, from which I had the honour and privilege and responsibility—and, by the way, burden—of graduating in 1988. The motto of that school is—and I think it injects a level of humility, either heartfelt or possibly simulated—*medicus servit, servat Deus*. That is, loosely translated, "The physician applies the dressing, but God heals the wound."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Richmond Hill has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Reza Moridi: I would like to thank the members from Durham, Trinity–Spadina, Bramalea–Gore–Malton, Etobicoke North and Beaches–East York for their contribution and for their eloquent speeches in support of my motion to proclaim the first day of May as Doctors' Day in Ontario.

As the speakers before me have indicated, we are blessed in this Legislature to have four of our honourable members be medical doctors: Dr. Shafiq Qaadri, Dr. Kuldeep Kular, Dr. Helena Jaczek and Dr. Eric Hoskins, who have been practising medicine for many, many years before joining this Legislature to represent their respective constituencies.

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On a personal note, two of my brothers, Dr. Muhsin Moridi and Dr. Farhad Moridi, and one of my sisters-in-law, Dr. Sharareh Moridi, are also medical doctors: practising in gynaecology, one being a coroner and the other being an ophthalmologist.

The member from Beaches–East York eloquently indicated the contributions of Chinese traditional medicine and Chinese traditional doctors in ancient years to the development of medicine, which was omitted from my presentation. I'm so grateful to the member for bringing this to the House's attention.

With regard to Islamic scientists and doctors, I indicated Avicenna, but there are many others who I couldn't mention. Within 10 to 12 minutes, it would have been very difficult to bring the whole history of this area of science and medicine.

I want to thank Dr. Larry Grossman and also the Ontario Medical Association for helping me to bring this motion forward. I urge all my honourable colleagues in this Legislature to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. The time for this ballot item has expired. We'll vote on the item in about 50 minutes.

AGENCIES, BOARDS
AND COMMISSIONS
SUNSET REVIEW ACT, 2011
LOI DE 2011 SUR LE RÉEXAMEN
DE L'UTILITÉ DES ORGANISMES,
CONSEILS ET COMMISSIONS

Mr. Hudak moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 168, An Act to provide for performance reviews of agencies, boards and commissions by the Assembly /
Projet de loi 168, Loi prévoyant l'examen par l'Assemblée du rendement des organismes, conseils et commissions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Tim Hudak: It is my pleasure to provide opening remarks on Bill 168, the Agencies, Boards and Commissions Sunset Review Act, 2011. One of the great opportunities of being leader of the PC Party in opposition is I get to travel across the province, talking to everyday Ontario families, small business owners, moms and dads and students about what is important to them. What they tell me is that when it comes to balancing their household budget, Ontario families must constantly re-evaluate their wants versus needs and how they're spending the family budget. Whether it's cutting back on dinners out, bundling services like cable and Internet or shopping around for a better deal on car insurance, families are always looking for better ways to save money. I believe we need to apply these same principles to government.

Instead of trying to be all things to all people, we need to focus on the basics, on services that people care about and need, like front-line health care. But under the McGuinty government, the provincial government has become too big, too expensive and too clumsy at delivering front-line services. Premier McGuinty's runaway spending and bureaucratic bloat is actually putting front-line services at risk as Ontario pays more and more to deal with the doubling of the provincial debt.

Members of the assembly know this all too well, what I hear from families and small business owners. You could probably take any three letters of the alphabet, put them in any order that you want to and you'll get some government agency, board or commission that you've never heard of but you're paying millions of dollars a year to sustain. You put an E in front of it and you're up into the billions.

The challenge is that we're digging ourselves into such a hole that if we continue at this pace, we may never be able to climb back out again. That's why it is crucial to get the size and cost of government under control and focus on the basics.

One week ago, the McGuinty Liberals revealed their sunshine list for 2010. It's a list of those throughout government who are paid more than \$100,000 a year. During Premier McGuinty's time in office, the sunshine list has more than tripled. Government program spending

has increased by 77%, but our economy has grown only by 9%.

What does this mean? Right now, there are 71,478 men and women on the sunshine list. That is like giving every man, woman and child in Sarnia a \$100,000-a-year government job. It's simply not affordable.

One of those individuals we've talked about in question period these last number of days—Ron Sapsford, a former Deputy Minister of Health who resigned after the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle—last year, despite allegedly having quit government the year before, was paid three quarters of a million dollars. In fact, he was given a raise after he quit. That is the legacy of a government agency that was allowed to spend with impunity, to waste taxpayers' dollars, and it's another perfect example of why we need the Agencies, Boards and Commissions Sunset Review Act.

This legislation would be ground breaking. It would create a committee of the Legislature, a committee made up of elected MPPs from all three parties, to represent their constituents in reviewing the more than 600 agencies, boards and commissions and government bodies created through legislation.

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: My colleague from Thornhill says that that's what accountability is all about, and he's right.

Here's what we would do. Basically, each body would need to come before the committee of MPPs to justify its ongoing existence, to demonstrate how it provides a value to the Ontario families who actually pay the bills and to show that their services are not duplicated elsewhere in government. The committee would then make recommendations to be voted on by this House, and those recommendations would follow three very simple criteria: If it works, then we'll keep it; if it needs to be fixed, then we fix it; but if it's no longer necessary or can't be fixed, then it goes, and the money is used for services like health care and to balance the books in the province of Ontario.

If we had had this legislation in place when the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle was spinning out of control, we could have stopped it in place. We could have forced eHealth officials to explain why they signed untendered contracts, why so many connected consultants were hired. Afterwards, the committee could have made recommendations to fix the problems. If we had caught this early enough, we could have saved Ontario families the \$1 billion that went down the drain and actually put it towards health care services instead. That's what this legislation is designed to do: to root out waste, to root out rot in government and to invest those savings in front-line services like health care, that Ontario families want to see.

If we pass the Agencies, Boards and Commissions Sunset Review Act, 2011, I'd also like to see them call for a review of Waste Diversion Ontario, to call upon them to explain the eco tax fiasco and to justify why it will cost Ontario families \$18 million more for the eco tax mess. The committee could also call upon the Muni-

cipal Property Assessment Corp., also known as MPAC, and ask it why it handed out \$1,700 in tailor-made golf clubs, Nintendo Wiis and iPods, and why it has gotten one out of eight assessments wrong by 20% or more—it's outrageous. The WSIB would have to explain why it has more than 300 staffers on the sunshine list being paid a combined \$39 million a year. That's actually up from 139 staffers being paid less than half of that—\$18 million a year—when Premier McGuinty took office. You see that kind of waste and bloat, and all the time, small businesses are seeing their rates increase and injured workers are not getting the treatment and attention they deserve to get back in the workforce again.

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This review could have also called on the Ontario Power Authority, this so-called transitional agency, to justify its very existence. The OPA would need to explain why, in 2005, it had six employees on the sunshine list and, today, the number has ballooned to 91, an increase of 1,400%—all the way, driving up our hydro bills, and by how we can move the OPA's mandate to more appropriate areas of government. We'd be able to save \$80 million each and every year and, very importantly, help Ontario families get relief on the hydro bills that are going through the roof in our province today.

Very importantly, I want to point out once again, hoping to attract members of the party opposite, that the people actually conducting these reviews aren't going to be high-priced, fancy consultants. They're not going to be ministry staff. They'll be actual members of the Legislature, those who are elected by Ontario families to show respect for each and every tax dollar that they send here to Queen's Park.

That is our plan. Hopefully, it's supported by MPPs opposite. I know it's supported by my colleagues and, importantly, supported by businesses and Ontario families alike.

Satinder Chera, vice-president, Ontario, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, says, "The proposed Agencies, Boards and Commissions Sunset Review Act would prevent these agencies from thumbing their nose at law-abiding small businesses."

Peter Coleman, president and CEO of the National Citizens Coalition, says, "It is about time that the provincial government did a complete review of organizations that they fund, and those organizations should, in turn, have to go through a review process to justify their existence. This is the only way the taxpayers will have faith in the transparency of government, to justify the taxpayer money that is used to fund government agencies, boards and commissions. A breath of fresh air would roll throughout Ontario if this bill were to become the law."

So I call on members of this House to stand with the small and medium-sized businesses that the CFIB represents, to stand with the families that the National Citizens Coalition represent, to stand with families who are tired of paying more and more in taxes and getting less in return, and to join the Ontario PC caucus to pass the

Agencies, Boards and Commissions Sunset Review Act into law in the province of Ontario.

As part of that, I call on members of this House to commit to rooting out waste and rot and doing away with expensive, bureaucratic government that Ontario families don't need and cannot afford, to put in what they care about, like front-line health care and balancing the books of our province so we don't mortgage the future of our children and our grandchildren.

I ask my colleagues to give those families the respect they deserve and the relief they need by reinvesting that money where it belongs: in front-line services. I ask my colleagues: Won't you join me in passing the Agencies, Boards and Commissions Sunset Review Act today?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I had a good, long read of this particular bill and can see precisely what it is intending to do and what we would hope it would do, but also what it would likely accomplish.

I have to state at the outset and preface my remarks by stating that I believe that the overwhelming majority of public employees, the overwhelming majority of people who serve on boards and commissions in this province, are honourable, that they do a good job, that they work for the people and the province of Ontario, and that we need to listen very carefully to the expertise and advice that they have.

I'm looking at the solution that is being put forward by my friend the leader of the official opposition. I wonder, and perhaps he can deal with this in his two minutes at the end: A committee already exists that can do almost everything he says.

I quote from the standing orders. The Standing Committee on Government Agencies has as its mandate to select and review agencies, boards and commissions "with a view to reducing possible redundancy and overlapping, improving the accountability of agencies, rationalizing the functions of the agencies, identifying those agencies or parts of agencies which could be subject to sunset provisions, and revising the mandates and roles of agencies." That's what it does. That is what it has been capable of doing. That's what it can do.

Now I do understand that there are a lot of agencies out there. I was shocked, in doing research for this, to find that there are 723 government agencies in the province of Ontario, and I will have to state that maybe—maybe—we don't need 723.

But I am also mindful of what happened in 1995. I am mindful of when a government came in and said they were going to review. It wasn't a review; it was an axe. I am very, very cognizant that should I or my colleagues support this motion, and I guess members opposite support this too, and should the Conservatives find themselves on that side of the hall after the next election, they will turn and say "Well, you know, parties of all stripes supported our motion last time." I do not want to see that kind of axe taken to Ontario. I do not want to see the kinds of excess that took place then take place again. Because we all know what happened.

There are but 76 agencies that cannot currently be reviewed by the standing committee. Perhaps it would be more appropriate to fold those 76 into the standing committee. They include some biggies like the Ontario Power Authority, the Independent Electricity System Operator and Waste Diversion Ontario. I would like to see those folded in, and I think if we are to do the job, and the job right, that is where we should head.

Having said that, I understand that many people in this province are upset. I think the honourable member recognizes what people are saying out there. He's listening to what the concerns are, but I am not convinced that the solution he is putting forward is the correct one. Of course, we must all look to find out what is going wrong, and we need to have the courage to replace it.

But I have been on this side of the House only; I am the dean of those who have never served in government. I've been here longer than anyone else who has never been in government. I will tell you that I am being treated the same way by this government as I was by the last one.

When you go to committee, your ideas are very seldom listened to. The proposals you put forward are very seldom listened to. The motions you make are very seldom listened to. I am equally mindful of the fact that these committees, or the new ABC committee that's being set up here, will have a majority of government members, whoever they are, and that whatever suggestions are being made will be carried on those votes and those votes alone.

I remember only too well—this was from the Conservatives before—when I first got into this House. I thought I knew a few things about municipalities, having been a councillor, a mayor and a megacity councillor. I will never forget going into my first committee meeting and having all my recommendations shot down.

Morley Kells was then the parliamentary assistant, and I will never forget his words when it came to my fifth motion to try to change the Municipal Act to make it better. He said words to the effect: "This is a really good motion. I don't know why we didn't think of this motion. I wish we had thought of this motion. It's not ours, so we're going to vote against it." I never, ever forgot that day. I never forgot it, because it has happened to me—never so eloquently again—each and every time I go to committee, whether it's this government or that government.

I don't want to give the kind of authority that's being given here to do away with agencies and boards at the whim of whoever holds the majority.

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What I think we all need to do is study this. We have to have good, rational reasons for what we do, and in the end, we have to do what is right, not just what a majority of committee members might do, not what they might do if they were in government, not what the Liberals might do if they were in government, and perhaps not even what we might do if we found ourselves again in government. It has to be an all-party decision.

Until I am convinced that there is a way around the way committees operate in this place—and perhaps they can only operate fairly in a minority government—then we cannot give this kind of authority. Because I know what he is saying—we have to do something—but I am not convinced that the solution lies here, I reluctantly will not be able to support this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Levac: I'd like to take the opportunity to explain, as I normally do when I stand to speak in private members' time—it's private members' time. I appreciate the fact that the member from Niagara West—Glanbrook has presented a bill that we want to debate here during private members' time.

There are three things I want to talk about. First of all, I want to talk about history before 2003, which tends to get forgotten, and history between 2003 and 2009, with regard to the private member's bill that we're talking about right now. I'm going to stay specific about what he's talking about.

Let's give you a backgrounder on things that we've done from 2003 to now. We've taken several steps already to try to find those efficiencies that they're talking about. We froze compensation structures for all non-bargaining public sector employees: doesn't get mentioned. Travel costs and other expenses have been reined in: not spoken about.

We requested Hydro One and OPG to revise down their 2010 rate applications and savings: This was done. Our energy agencies were asked to significantly reduce their operational costs, which is right to the heart of what this member is asking us to do. For 2011, the OPA has reduced its operating budget by 4.1%. The Independent Electricity System Operator, IESO, has reduced costs by \$23 million since we came into office. Hydro One has reduced its operational costs by \$170 million this year alone. OPG will reduce operations by more than \$600 million over the next four years.

We've paid down over \$20 billion of the stranded debt. The previous Tory government did not pay down anything, and they actually added \$1 billion to that. They also slapped the debt retirement charge on every consumer's bill. They don't want to tell you those things. That's what I'm trying to say: There are things that you have heard, that you won't hear from the opposition, and things that we need to hear. We've paid down that \$20 billion.

Compensation for the top 20 executives—this is the political fodder that's being passed around very easily. The top 20 executives of Ontario Power Generation are, on average, 35% lower than they were in 2002. That's not even with inflation. When you add inflation to that, it's about 50% lower than the compensation was under Tory rule in 2002. That's a sizable reduction in those kinds of compensation that they're talking about.

Compensation for the CEO of Hydro One, Laura Formosa, today is 55% lower than it was for Eleanor Clitheroe under the Tories in 2002. Wow, you didn't hear

that. You didn't hear that, and why not? Because it doesn't fit into the picture that's being attempted to be painted by this particular bill and the way in which the opposition has been talking.

We brought forward legislation requiring expenses to be posted online for ministers, their staff, and executives of public agencies like hospitals and hydro companies. And who voted against that? The Tories. The Tories wasted \$250 million of public money for partisan ads, and they voted against the legislation that brought sunshine to that practice. I find that rather interesting.

The PCs have very little credibility when it comes to standing up. It's like the rooster taking credit for the sun shining. I've said that before, and I know they don't like hearing it. They tend to heckle when I say it, because, "I'm going to take credit for something that I didn't do, but, by the way, don't pay attention to the history before 2003."

The salaries of the top 20 executives of OPG are now, on average, as I said, 35% lower, but on their watch they didn't do anything to rein that in. Now they're in the opposition, and now it's the popular concept of saying, "We'd better say something bad about what the government's not doing."

Let's not forget, it was the PC Party that—
Interjection.

Mr. Dave Levac: If the member wants to use this time to say whether this is true or not—the PC Party removed Hydro One and OPG from being subject to freedom of information. I would like to know why. Why did they do that? Why did they take that information away from the public in an act that basically said, "You must tell us what that is"? Why did you do that?

Interjection: Are they hiding something?

Mr. Dave Levac: Are they hiding something?

Wait a minute; let me find out. Mr. Harris's director of communication, Paul Rhodes, was paid \$225,000 to produce a 10-page work for Hydro One. The campaign chair, Tom Long, was given \$1.4 million in hydro consulting contracts—while they were in office. The director of policy, John Toogood, was paid \$30,000 a week trying to convince Ontarians that privatization of the electric grid was a good idea. The campaign manager made over \$340,000 off the Tory hydro system, including \$250,000 to build support for the investment in Hydro One—a.k.a. privatization. Mike Harris himself was on Hydro One. I don't know why we didn't have a freedom-of-information capacity to find that information out. When we did, we found it out. The kettle itself is having a little problem here.

What have we done? Let's make sure that this private member's bill is explained in a way that I think the member from Beaches–East York was trying to explain, and I tend to agree with his concern and his observation. Here's what is going on: We've created a commission of broader public sector reform, to be led by Don Drummond, which will advise on the changes that will help protect services that are important to families.

I've got very little time. If I could get another hour, I could get into this. The commission's recommendations

cannot increase taxes or privatize the health care system. So here's what they're going to do: They reduce the size of the OPS by an additional 1,500 positions, over and above the 3,400 already committed in 2012; major agencies must deliver \$200 million in efficiencies by 2013. I've got a list that's an arm long; I could go over some of the reforms that are taking place.

One of the things I do talk about in private members' time is the fluid nature of this place. We will be getting better in each and every government that comes in and makes an attempt to try to improve things, but I am saying this very sincerely about what the member opposite is trying to accomplish. Right now, we're talking about an opportunity that says we've got a couple of "gotchas" here. I still want to bring us back to that comment: The rooster does not get credit for the sun rising, and you ain't getting credit for this one.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a real pleasure to stand by and behind my leader, Tim Hudak, as he brings forward this very important piece of legislation that puts Ontario families first. We are going to bring back respect and bring back relief to the taxpayers of this province through this piece of legislation, which will obviously be a cornerstone of our plan as we move forward in government in 2011 and 2012.

I want to congratulate the member for Niagara West–Glanbrook, who is also the leader of the Ontario PC Party, for taking the concerns of Ontario families and putting them together in this private member's bill that every member of this Legislature should get behind and support. We believe a sunset review of the many government agencies, boards and commissions across this province is needed so that we can justify each one of their expenditures for the people who are paying their bills—and that's the folks at home, whether in Nepean or in Niagara. Certainly the folks who are paying our bills here today appreciate that, particularly during these tough economic times.

Of course, earlier last week we saw a provincial budget that has done a few things. One is, it still has a \$17-billion deficit. We have a quarter-of-a-trillion-dollar debt in this province. Remember the time when you thought a trillion was not really a number at all because it was something that the Americans had as a debt? Dalton McGuinty single-handedly was able to double the debt in Ontario and bring our debt into the quarter-of-a-trillion-dollar area. At the same time, this is a Premier who has brought our province into have-not status. It's shameful. He has grown our dependence on the federal government's handouts by, I believe, well over 100%.

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Not only that; last week—last Thursday—we were present when the sunshine list was released, and we saw that grow in a time of supposed austerity by 11%. When people in this province were told that they were supposed to cut back, when public servants were told that they weren't going to see a raise, Mr. McGuinty found a way to give an 11% increase on that sunshine list.

Of course, all week in the Legislature our leader, our deputy leader and many of my colleagues have been raising the fact that certain people have not done a day's worth of work in 2010 but received a quarter of a million dollars from the taxpayers of this province. I speak to Ron Sapsford. I speak about Sarah Kramer. I speak about the Montfort's Savoie.

All at the same time, we're learning that precious health care dollars are going to people who aren't even working for the province anymore, almost to the tune of \$2 million, while the Queensway Carleton Hospital that services my constituents is looking at a \$2-million cut at the surgical unit. Ten weeks of rolling closures because they don't have the money, because—guess why? People like Ron Sapsford and others have taken that golden handshake.

Let me tell you why this fits into the bill that my colleague and my leader has put forward. He believes that every government, board, agency and commission must justify their existence to the taxpayer of this province. That includes the local health integration networks. We've seen a dramatic increase of the people making over \$100,000 a year in those agencies, and at the same time, not one of those employees plugs in an MRI or treats a cancer patient; none of them are in the ER when a mother is waiting 10 hours with her child. I happen to know these things because I have a small child and I have spent some time at the Queensway Carleton Hospital—a long period of time.

We need to ensure that these government boards, agencies and commissions, and even our ministries, are doing what they should be doing. That's why our leader, Tim Hudak, wants members of this assembly, regardless of political party, to play a key role in protecting vital health care dollars and public service dollars so that they are spent the way they are intended to be spent.

The people of this province sent us here for a reason, and they want us to stand up for them. So, ladies and gentlemen, you have an opportunity to do that today. You have an opportunity to stand up and defend your taxpayer dollars and you have an opportunity to stand up with the member from Niagara West—Glanbrook. I urge you to vote yes on this piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I was struggling as I was sitting here, because I said to myself, "How am I going to be nice to my Conservative brothers and sisters here?" When you're in opposition, you come close, every now and then, on many things, and it's hard. So I've got a couple of nice things to say, and then it's over.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: But you know I can help you with a seat, right? Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Good point.

Here are the two things I agree with, with the leader of the Conservative Party. People are struggling today more than ever. That's a fact. They say that; we say that. They see that in their ridings; we see that in our ridings.

People can't make ends meet. Many of them are working part-time jobs—now, more than ever, I see it every-

where—and many of them have to work at two jobs or three, sometimes, to survive. It's not pretty out there.

The Conservative Party often talks about making efficiencies and the need to do that. We agree with that as well, and I think all governments have to make a concerted effort to deal with the issue of efficiencies.

But how do we do that? The leader of the Conservative Party suggests that the way we do that is to create another standing committee to deal—

Interruption.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's not here. It can't be here.

The way the Conservative Party talks about this is that what we need to do is create yet another standing committee to find efficiencies. What I want to say to my good pals here is that you are contradicting the spirit of your bill. You will create another committee to deal with waste that, in and of itself, will create waste. It's a little problemo.

What we have is a board, agency or commission at the moment. All we have to do is empower them to make sure that they go out and make sure that they do the work that they do with so many other committees; with the 76 boards, agencies and commissions over which they have no power.

By the way, once you become government, you could easily do that tomorrow. You don't have to worry about that. If that's what your wish is, if you become government on October 6, you can do that right away. My point is, let's force whoever's in government now to make sure that the agencies that are not subject to our power now would be, and that that committee that currently exists would have the job of doing that.

The problem is this: No government ever wants to give that committee the kind of power that the Conservative caucus, at the moment, is saying they should have. We'll wait and see who becomes the government on October 6 and see what kind of power we give to that committee, because I haven't seen it. In my life here, when I was in government, when I witnessed the Conservative Party and when I witnessed the Liberals, no one empowers the members to have the power they should have in committee. No one. Would it change in the future? I don't know. I haven't been convinced, because I haven't seen it.

The Conservative Party says the problem is bloated government, a bloated civil service. We heard that language from Mike Harris. When he was in power I was there, and what I saw was a Conservative Party that eliminated positions and created more consultants than we ever saw in the system, in the provincial government, ever. We fired civil servants, created more consultants than ever and then we rehired the people we fired as consultants. That did not create efficiencies. If what the Conservatives mean by "efficiencies" is that we need to fire people, that's not the way to do it. It's just not the way to do it.

We have a choice. The Tories want to continue with the cuts to corporations, as do the Liberals. The Liberals are giving away \$6 billion in corporate tax cuts. Boy,

could we use that money to help those struggling men and women who can't make ends meet.

We have a choice about how we make life easier for working men and women. This will not do it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to join the debate today on Bill 168, An Act to provide for performance reviews of agencies, boards and commissions by the Assembly, introduced by my colleague the leader of the PC caucus. The bill before us will give the Legislature strong powers to review, reform or dissolve any agency, board or commission that is not meeting a public need.

You might ask, why do we need a greater ability to review? Well, I think there are two or three reasons that make it important. One of them is the question of relevance: Quite simply, some things that used to be useful simply no longer are. The question of good intentions: Sometimes it appears, after a period of time, that someone's good idea turns out not to be practical, not to work, because times change and circumstances change; because sometimes necessary changes are pushed aside by government because there are more important things to do.

It's really all about accountability. An agency should only exist if it continues to meet public needs and that particular agency is the best way to provide the service.

The McGuinty government has a real problem with accountability. I can name two occasions since 2003 when I attempted to amend government bills to ensure accountability and had my amendments voted down. In 2006, during legislation reforming children's aid societies, I suggested that after three years, the government appoint a person to review whether the new act increased the number of crown wards, children in the care of the state, being permanently adopted by families—which, by the way, was the purpose of the bill. The Liberals voted it down.

In 2009, when the Liberals passed the Poverty Reduction Act, a bill requiring little more than writing an annual report, I proposed that this annual report at least be presented to a committee of the Legislature for review. The Liberals voted this down as well. They wouldn't even put more accountability in the bill that they claimed would reduce poverty. Two very concrete examples of proposals for accountability introduced by the Progressive Conservative Party, yet the government refused to join our drive.

1540

That is why I so strongly support our leader's bill to make agencies accountable. We must remember that this Legislature and all of its members work for everyone in Ontario, and every agency must as well, or it should be abolished. This must be a part of a change in the culture of how government operates. Changing the culture was the impetus for my small business bill of rights, requiring the government to consider the effects of putting too many unnecessary rules on business and making the government accountable to each small business person.

The government should be accountable to the Legislature and, most importantly, to the people. I am proud that our leader is proposing a bill to make agencies work for families, citizens and businesses.

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Stop the clock for a minute. I'd just remind people to not have their BlackBerrys near the microphones. It really hurts the ears of our translators who wear the headphones. So, just as a courtesy to them.

Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: It is a distinct pleasure this afternoon to respond to our leader's private members' bill, Bill 168, An Act to provide for performance reviews—at this time, very importantly—of agencies, boards and commissions by the Assembly. I think this really has an interesting history. It's really all about accountability and respect for taxpayers—that's really all it's about—and it seems to be sorely missing in the last several question periods; that's pretty much what we've heard from the opposition and third party. We haven't had one clear answer from the Premier, the Minister of Finance—the whole front bench, basically, I think is in lockdown mode. The reason they are is because they just had the budget and they're still hemorrhaging money on things that we saw in the sunshine list.

It's kind of a coincidence that the sunshine list came out—to see the egregious waste in these agencies, many of whom, as our leader said, if you had any three letters there would be hundreds of them. It turns out there are over 700 of these agencies. I've taken the time, besides reading and looking at the purpose of the bill, to look at some of the background of why our leader decided to get to the root cause of the waste and lack of resources in the province of Ontario.

We were all asked to look carefully at our own critic files as well as the major expenditure areas of the government, wondering why we're going downhill so quickly, and yet we're spending so much money and there are so few results. That's ultimately what we want, the accountability, which ties back to his initial content or response: to have some respect for the taxpayer.

This is not new. Standing order 108(f) provides for a standing committee of the Legislature to review agencies, boards and commissions. What's happened to that? I don't know whether it is instructions from the centre office, right from the Premier or not; I wouldn't want to presume that, but after all, he is in charge. If I look at the history here, in 2008, the committee met and reviewed several government agencies. WSIB—the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board—is in deficit by about \$10 billion or \$12 billion. This doesn't show on the debt part of it. The OLG, the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.—the auditor has looked at those. He's raised flags. We know all of those agencies that we're looking at. So that got shut down, and in 2009, we looked at another couple of commissions. These recommendations were brought forward by our committee members, mostly led by Lisa MacLeod.

In 2009, the committee reviewed eight government agencies, including the human rights commission and the OPA. The Ontario Power Authority is a story in itself. There's an agency that has grown, in a time of absolute escalating costs of electricity—supposedly, the power authority—you've got to blame somebody—has grown from about 13 employees to over 70 employees, many of whom make over \$500,000. It's unbelievable, the lack of accountability.

Now, I'm going to challenge the members on the other side to get up and name any one of the 70 people. Name the board—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: He's well over \$500,000. Name any of them, and they're making twice as much as anybody in any local business, and that would be a successful business too. Now, a recent—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: We have before us a proposal and supporting remarks that infer as fact a series of assertions that fail to stand up to scrutiny.

The member for Niagara West—Glanbrook says we need a review of Ontario's agencies, boards and commissions. Interesting idea, except that Ontario has already been doing that, and for some time. The bill before us proposes that the select or standing committee it aims to create conduct performance reviews of agencies, boards and commissions, except that Ontario has already been doing that, and for some time.

And one reason I'm not going to vote for this bill is because the review committee that this bill proposes to create will cease to exist in 2016. I and the government in which I serve think that we ought to review our agencies, boards and commissions on an ongoing basis. In fact, this escape clause, section 6 of the bill, forbids the proposed toothless committee from recommending that an agency, board or commission be dissolved—and here's the key part—unless the minister responsible has made a submission to the committee. In other words, the whole scheme is run out of the corner office, where the party leader decides what stays and what goes.

Now, let's look at how to do that job properly. Ontario will move forward with plans to close or amalgamate 14 agencies in the very near term. For example, the Stadium Corp. of Ontario will move under the merged Infrastructure Ontario and Ontario Realty Corp.: three agencies into one, in a proposal that really saves money and actually makes sense—common sense. In fact, Ontario proposes merging two entities dealing with mortgage matters into one and completely dissolving 11 other agencies, most of which the majority of people will never recognize. Now, that's real change, and these are real results.

And let's look at another branch of the Ontario government being gradually wound down: tax collection. Ontario will gradually transition some 1,250 people who once collected the old, antiquated, expensive provincial sales tax. Those people will receive their severance from

Ontario and be offered a two-year minimum term of employment with the government of Canada, although they'll lose all their seniority in the transition.

An agency that the member proposes to eliminate with no discussion at all is the Ontario Power Authority. This is curious, as under the member's own act, his own select committee would need to pass judgement on the merits of it. But he seems to have little use for his own proposed committee, as he has already made up his mind on the outcome and all the member needs now from his committee is the justification. Now, we know that the Ontario PC Party has no energy plan, and if you have no plan, then why do you need an agency full of planners? If you start from an ideologically driven outcome and work backwards to pick and choose your justification, you get the idea of this particular bill.

The one I love is the PC Party's commitment to eliminate local health integration networks, or LHINs. On their watch, they had a commission that closed down 28 hospitals, with all decisions made in Toronto, with no community input, and those decisions were final. Ontario's adoption of LHINs eliminated two layers of bureaucracy and replaced them with one, saving more money than it costs as it axed ministry regional offices and district health councils and reduced the number of community care access centres to 14.

But even though the member rails against LHINs daily, he did not even mention them once in his presentation. I wonder why. Perhaps somebody told him that LHINs spend 99.7% of their budget on patient care. Maybe it's because we can make decisions right in our communities, such as when we needed about two dozen beds recently at the Credit Valley Hospital and were able to act quickly and get them in days, not months. Maybe it's because Dr. Wilbert Keon, a former Conservative senator and now chair of the Champlain LHIN, disagrees, saying, "The big mistake in health care in Canada is there is too much centralization."

1550

Ontario is already doing better now than the bill proposes to do for only five years. Ontario's public service is among the leanest in North America per capita.

I'd also like to remind the member that his colleague from Beaches—East York chaired the Standing Committee on Government Agencies, and by his own admission already did, then and now, what the member proposes to do in this bill. That, to me, is ample justification for voting against this proposed measure.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Hudak has two minutes for his response. Mr. Hudak?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I want to thank my colleagues from Nepean—Carleton, York—Simcoe, Durham, Beaches—East York, Brant, Trinity—Spadina and Mississauga—Streetsville for their comments on the bill.

To correct a few things from my colleagues opposite, the member from Mississauga—Streetsville is incorrect in his view of the act. All it says is that ministers must be given the opportunity to provide input. That's not the way it was characterized by the member. I think that makes sense, obviously, as ministers could provide input.

To the point from the third party with respect to the committee, the bill actually compels ABCs to be put before a review. As it stands today, they're not currently compelled to do so, nor to justify their existence. This would be a committee that would be specialized in doing a total review. Most importantly, consistent with the legislation itself, once the agencies, boards and commissions committee had done their sunset review and saved money for taxpayers, the committee itself would be sunsetted as well. I think that makes a lot of sense.

I encourage my colleagues to do the right thing: to support this legislation. It would actually engage MPPs of all three parties, elected members of this House, to pare through the waste, to root out the rot in government of the more than 600 agencies, boards, commissions and government bodies created through legislation; to pull each body before this committee and ask them to justify their existence and prove their ongoing value to the Ontario families who pay their bills.

Again, if it works, you keep it; if it needs to be fixed, then you fix it; but if it is no longer necessary, you close the doors and use the money for front-line services and balancing the books. I ask my colleagues to support this sensible idea.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. The time provided for private members' public business has now expired.

Before we vote, a short announcement: I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Ms. Horwath assumes ballot item number 5 and Mr. Hampton assumes ballot item number 28.

DOCTORS' DAY

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with the first ballot item today, standing in the name of Mr. Moridi.

Mr. Moridi has moved private members' notice of motion number 55. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

AGENCIES, BOARDS
AND COMMISSIONS

SUNSET REVIEW ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LE RÉEXAMEN
DE L'UTILITÉ DES ORGANISMES,
CONSEILS ET COMMISSIONS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Now we'll deal with ballot item number 77.

Mr. Hudak has moved second reading of Bill 168, An Act to provide for performance reviews of agencies, boards and commissions by the Assembly. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1554 to 1559.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Hudak has moved second reading of Bill 168. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John
Bailey, Robert	Klees, Frank	Savoline, Joyce
Barrett, Toby	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Chudleigh, Ted	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Qadri, Shafiq
Arthurs, Wayne	Jaczek, Helena	Rinaldi, Lou
Balkissoon, Bas	Johnson, Rick	Ruprecht, Tony
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kular, Kuldip	Sandals, Liz
Best, Margaret	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Brownell, Jim	Levac, Dave	Sorbara, Greg
Cansfield, Donna H.	Marchese, Rosario	Sousa, Charles
Colle, Mike	Moridi, Reza	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	Pendergast, Leeanna	Zimmer, David
Dhillon, Vic	Phillips, Gerry	
Dickson, Joe	Prue, Michael	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 15; the nays are 31.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All matters pertaining to private members' public business have now been completed. I do now call orders of the day.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Phillips moves adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1601.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
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Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

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Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor—Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby—Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora—Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham—Kent—Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West—Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest—Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges—Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton—Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea—Gore—Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean—Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga—Brampton South / Mississauga—Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity—Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa—Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	
Vacant	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	

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Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Kim Craiton, Bob Delaney
Garfield Dunlop, Peter Fonseca
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Maria Van Bommel
Clerks / Greffiers: Valerie Quioc Lim, Sylwia Przewdziecki

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Bob Delaney, Kevin Daniel Flynn
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Norm Miller, Leeanna Pendergast
Peter Tabuns
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Jim Brownell, Steve Clark
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Amrit Mangat, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, David Orazietti
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Deuxième session, 39^e législature

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Lundi 11 avril 2011

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 11 April 2011

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 11 avril 2011

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I would like to welcome to the Ontario Legislature today Mr. Amarjit Singh Sahi. He is a member of the Legislative Assembly of Punjab, India, and represents the riding of Dasuya.

I also would like to welcome Dr. Sarbjit Singh Dhillon as well. He runs a very successful dental practice with his wife, Supinder Dhillon, in Brampton. Also accompanying them is Charanjit Dhami of New Malwa Express Transport. They are here to watch question period, and I want to wish them all the best. Enjoy question period.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to welcome a long-time friend of mine, a retired General Motors manager as well as a constituent of Christine Elliott: George Mech. Welcome to Queen's Park, George, for the day.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'd like to ask all members to help me in welcoming the family of page Riley McPhail, who are coming into the visitors' gallery: his mother, Lynn McPhail; his father, Jim McPhail; and his sister, and perhaps a page of the future, Maddie.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'd like to welcome to the House today Derek Neal, who is an assistant professor of history at Nipissing University in North Bay. We're delighted to have him here for a tour and for lunch. Welcome, Derek.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very pleased to introduce today the family of my page, Leighton Zink, from the riding of Kitchener-Waterloo. His mother, father, brothers and sister are here, as well as his uncle and cousins. We extend a very, very warm welcome. He's doing a great job.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTERS' EXPENSES

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Last week, Premier, you and your ministers dodged about 50 questions around the three quarters of a million dollars

paid to Ron Sapsford. Mr. Sapsford was your deputy minister who resigned in the wake of the eHealth scandal. Premier, you yourself dodged every question asked of you, but today's question is harder to dodge because it's about you.

On September 14, 2009, you said that you and your cabinet ministers would post your expenses online by April 1, 2010. A full year has now passed. Premier, can you explain to Ontario families why you have failed to comply with your own legislation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to take the question. I want to begin by reminding my honourable colleague and television viewers that my friends opposite stand adamantly opposed to this provision. They voted against this particular provision. They have no interest whatsoever in making those expenses public.

I think it's important that we understand our moral footing as we presume to put these kinds of questions. I look forward to more supplementaries.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I guess that counts as another dodge, beginning this week the same way. Premier, you dodged every question last week about your secret sweetheart deal with Ron Sapsford.

Premier, you yourself said that all expenses for ministers, including yourself, would be posted by April 1, 2010. It is now April 11, 2011. You have not posted a single expense as Premier of this province in over a year. You said you would do this; you have failed to do so. The Premier of the province is breaking his own legislation.

Premier, it's not a hard question. Why did you fail to post your own expenses online? What exactly are you trying to hide?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The fact is, any expenses that I have had, I have in fact posted, and I recommend that my honourable colleague look.

I find it a little bit interesting that this is yet another practice that we have put into place—whether it's expanding the freedom-of-information ambit, whether it's giving more power to the auditor to look into our transfer agencies, like our colleges and universities and hospitals and the like, they oppose those kinds of things. Yet they put questions to us because they're somehow concerned that we're not living up to standards that they themselves oppose.

Again, I want to assure my colleague that we are in fact abiding by all the standards that we've put in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, with all due respect, you're not. You are failing to abide by your own legislation. The Premier just said—I thought I heard him say that he himself has posted all of his expenses. Well, Premier, in 2009 you jetted to India, to Israel and China in 2010 and to Washington, DC earlier this year, but your own site fails to post a single airline ticket, a single hotel or any other expense.

Premier, unless you've suddenly learned how to fly, I have to ask you why the Premier of the province is not complying with his own legislation. This is not a tricky question, Premier. Why have you failed to post your own expenses for more than a year?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I recommend to my honourable colleague that he take a look at all the postings that emanate from my office. He's going to find everything there in very clear detail.

I'd also recommend to my colleague that he take this opportunity to declare for the first time his support for the new kinds of accountability provisions that we have put in place. I'd like him to say that he supports the expansion of the FOI provisions that we put in place, that he supports the new authorities that we've given to the auditor and that he supports the kinds of posted expenses that we now require, which apply to government and which apply to their offices as well. I would ask him to embrace the provisions that we have in fact put in place.

MINISTERS' EXPENSES

Mr. Tim Hudak: Sadly, the Premier seems to be flip-flopping and changing his very own story in the House. Premier, a couple of minutes ago you said that you posted all of your expenses online. Now you've flip-flopped in a subsequent question and said "all of the things that emanate from my office." That's meaningless and dodging the question.

Here is exactly what you said. Here's your quote: "We're going to shine a light on" all "expenses so Ontarians will know who exactly is spending what exactly"—who exactly is spending what exactly. But now you're putting the curtain over your own expenses.

Premier, won't you come clean? Why have you as Premier failed to comply with your very own legislation?
1040

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: In the interest of transparency, I would urge my honourable colleague to tell us a little bit more about a particular individual who is seeking the nomination on behalf of his party. His name is Kevin Gaudet, and in particular, he said this about labour relations: "We need a Wisconsin up here.... The problem is similar."

When we look at what's happening in Wisconsin today, we see chaos, we see confusion, we see dissent, we see animosity and we see a failure of two sides to come together, work together and serve the greater public interest. I would encourage my honourable colleague to take the time here now to tell us a little bit about the statement and whether his party in fact endorses the statement, "We need a Wisconsin up here" in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: What an utterly bizarre response from the Premier of our province. Premier, you didn't even come close to answering the question about your own legislation.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Minister of Municipal Affairs and Minister of Finance, please come to order.

Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's almost like you're not even trying anymore. Premier, just answer this basic question. You have failed to post a single expense for more than a year now. You seem to be trying to hide those expenses somewhere.

It's not only you, Premier, but it's your ministers as well; your current Minister of Research and Innovation, for example, who happened to win a Teddy waste award as mayor of Winnipeg. In his next job as chair of the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, he expensed 128 flights over three years, but he has not posted a single expense.

Premier, is the minister simply following your example? Why aren't you complying with your own legislation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I will give my honourable colleague an example, but I look forward to hearing about his intention to create a Wisconsin here in Ontario, Canada.

For example, there is an expense report detail provided by Tracey Sobers; she works in the office of the Premier. The purpose of this filing was the Council of the Federation: paid airfare for Premier McGuinty and Mrs. McGuinty; the dates are provided; the destination is provided; the airfare is provided; accommodation is there; travel incidentals are zero, by the way; hospitality is zero. This is, in fact, the way we've been addressing this for a long time. It's all there in black and white. I'd encourage my honourable colleague to take a good look at it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, you said that all your expenses would be posted by April 1, 2010. You have absolutely failed to post any under your name.

Your Minister of Research and Innovation, despite his reputation for jet-setting around the world on the taxpayer's back, has not posted a single expense. Similarly, your Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, your Minister of Tourism and your Minister of Citizenship and Immigration have not posted a single expense for more than a year, breaking the law that you claimed was going to make a difference in the province.

There's a word, Premier, for when you say one thing and do the opposite, which I can't use here in the House, but people know what that's all about. They're tired of a government that says one thing and does the opposite. Why do you and your ministers break your own legislation about posting your expenses for Ontario families to see?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm looking through my notes here, and I recall a distinct reference to something about a fishing licence and can't seem to find that here. But maybe in a moment it will come back to me, and maybe it will trigger a particular memory to my honourable colleague.

We have put in place a number of new rules. I am proud to say that we are following those rules scrupulously. They must be approved by an independent third party; that was not the case back then. Each and every one of our expenses has, in fact, been approved, or they're not posted and individuals must pay for those. So I'm very confident of that.

Where there is a lack of confidence, where there is uncertainty that has been introduced into Ontario politics today, is a new determination on the part of that party, apparently, to make of Ontario a Wisconsin. We think it is a very unfortunate—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. With each passing day, it becomes clearer that this government's energy policy is in complete chaos and that costs are spiralling out of control. On Friday, the OEB once again increased rates for 17 electricity utilities. This government has already added 8% to home heating bills, 8% to filling up at the gas pumps and now yet another round of hydro increases.

Ontarians want to know one thing and one thing only: When is this nickel-and-dime going to stop?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I think something else that Ontario families deserve to know is, where do you stand on all these issues? You stand here and you chirp about increases that may be going forward to local distribution companies, knowing full well that they're independent of this government, knowing full well that they need to make investments in their infrastructure to ensure that our distribution system is strong and knowing full well that they invest in conservation programs.

When you speak to environmentalists, you say you stand for all that, but when you speak here in this House, Mr. Speaker, what that leader of the third party says is she doesn't support those investments. I think Ontario families deserve to know: Where did the NDP lose their way, and where is it that you really stand on these issues?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontarians tell me that they are feeling like they're being nickel-and-dimed to death, people like Alice St. Aubin of Dryden, Ontario. She writes this: "My hydro bill has gone from 30% to 40% higher with HST and also the time-of-use rate.

"When does hydro expect us to cook in our home? I no longer use a dishwasher. I got rid of my deep freeze, changed the light bulbs to high-efficiency etc.

"Still, my hydro bills keep getting higher."

What does the Premier have to say to people like Ms. St. Aubin?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I guess the leader of the third party wasn't here when we introduced our clean energy benefit. Our clean energy benefit is taking 10% off the bills of every Ontario family, farmer and small business. It's saving Ontario families about \$150 a year; small businesses, on average, about \$1,700; farmers about \$2,000, on average, a year. We're working very hard with Ontario families to ensure that we are helping them through the investments that we need to make.

But I guess what the NDP are saying is that they don't support the investments we are making to move out of dirty coal to cleaner sources of power, to create thousands of clean energy jobs and to help farmers with opportunities in our microFIT program; they're making up to \$10,000 a year on these programs. Why do you not support farmers? Why do you not support jobs in—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The fact of the matter is, people are struggling to pay the bills, people like Louise Tancredi of Kapuskasing. She writes: "Imagine my surprise when my hydro bill almost doubled from the same time last year.

"Last December, my bill was \$210. It's usually about \$100. I attributed this extra cost to Christmas, but the same thing happened in January.

"Something is very wrong here."

Premier, jobs are scarce. Gas at the pumps is going through the roof. What is this government going to do for people like Louise Tancredi who struggle day in and day out to keep their heads above water?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I think it's time for the leader of the third party to come clean with that constituent and the rest of Ontario families. They're all over the map on their energy policy. They don't support the important investments we're making to build a clean energy economy. Let me give you an example of that: A New Democratic vice-president said, with the alleged backing of the leader and her critic, that he fully supports a moratorium on renewable energy development.

When you speak to environmentalists, you say you support our investments in clean energy, but then you get up on your feet today and you blatantly oppose these important investments that are moving us out of dirty coal, that are building a cleaner and healthier future for our kids and grandkids. You've got to either support the investments or not, but Ontario families deserve to know where you stand.

1050

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. Ontarians can't afford to pay another penny—people like Marilyn Markham of Windsor, Ontario, for example. She writes this: "I have been on a fixed income due to many physical problems.

"With the higher prices, I am worried I may lose my house, not because of mortgage payments but due to the HST, gas prices, utilities etc.

"It is a crying shame that has me completely stressed."

When will this Premier finally start listening to everyday Ontarians like Marilyn Markham and start providing some real relief?

Interjection.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I've got a strong team, and I'm proud of it.

I'm pleased to take the question. My honourable colleague and I in fact share the same kinds of concerns when it comes to ensuring that all Ontarians, especially those who find themselves in the lower income bracket, have the supports they need to support their own families and find success and opportunity here in Ontario. That's why we invest so heavily, for example, in our schools, our health care and environmental protection.

But I also want to remind my honourable colleague what her own colleague the MPP for Beaches—East York recently said. He said, "The tax burden has gone down on everyone, in spite of what people think. You know, taxes have gone down, literally in all income groups." He's right. I'd recommend that understanding to my honourable colleague, the leader of the NDP.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People just don't understand how this government can shovel out \$6 billion in tax breaks to Ontario's largest corporations and yet not give ordinary Ontarians a break on their hydro bills—Ontarians like Tom Fickling of London. He writes this: "With the recent recession and my job loss in the automotive sector in 2008 I am now earning just over half the income I was earning prior to the recession.

"And the price of fuel, energy and interest rate increases are all cutting deeper into an already significantly reduced income."

When will this Premier finally start listening to Ontarians like Tom Fickling and do something to give them a break?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the concern raised again by my honourable colleague and the individual for whom she's raising it. I want to remind you, Speaker, and all members of the House that more job numbers came in on Friday. The economy in Ontario keeps growing. Jobs keep coming back in Ontario. We've now recovered 93% of the jobs that we lost during the recession. Again, that stands in good comparison to the US, where they've recovered 17%, and the UK, where they've recovered, I think, close to 43% now.

My honourable colleague mentioned in passing something about the auto sector. Again, we were there for our auto sector where some 300,000 or 400,000 jobs hung in the balance. We were not going to cut those families loose, so we came to the table with several billion dollars. Again, I am pleased to report that as part of a growing economy, that sector in and of itself is also growing stronger. Production is up. All the workers who were laid off have been recalled. In fact, we've heard of some

expansions and new investment. The fact of the matter is, we are going in the right direction.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People just cannot take it any more—people like Jeanne Marleau from Barrie. She writes: "We are a retired couple and living on a fixed income. The rise in food, clothing, heat and hydro has put a strain on our finances.

"My husband and I worked for 80 years collectively, raising a family, and feel it is unfair to impose such an outrageous tax.

"We have also voted Liberal all of our lives, but come this provincial election, it is very doubtful."

When will this Premier finally start listening to people like the Marleaus and finally start giving Ontarians a much-needed break?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We will not adopt the approach taken by the NDP in Nova Scotia, where they increased the HST by 2%. That's not the direction that we are pursuing.

When it comes to energy, as my honourable colleague will recollect—and it would be nice to have her public acknowledgment of this—she was recommending to us that we reduce the cost of electricity by 8%. We said that was insufficient. We've reduced it by 10%. We've taken it two points further.

I'll remind my honourable colleague as well that when it comes to income taxes, the average Ontario family is receiving a \$355 income tax cut this year and every year going forward. That's on top of our energy and property tax credits of up to \$900 for families and over \$1,000 for seniors. Then there's our permanent sales tax credit: \$260 for low- and middle-income Ontarians. That's going to benefit over a million Ontarians.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Minister of Health. For the first time since you created them in 2006, every one of your local health integration networks is part of the million-dollar club. The 2010 sunshine list shows that you paid over \$1 million for executive salaries at each of the 14 LHINs. The Ontario PC caucus supports hard-working front-line health care workers who do a great job in spite of your diverting money to pay bureaucrats who don't see a single patient or perform a single surgery.

Minister, why do you believe health care dollars are better spent on bloated salaries of your LHIN executives instead of on front-line patient care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very happy to have this opportunity. The member opposite knows that when we created the LHINs, we actually eliminated two layers of bureaucracy and, in combination, we're spending no more money on LHINs than was spent under the previous plan with the two layers of bureaucracy.

What we've added is a local voice to health care decisions. The planning that the LHINs are responsible for is

making a real difference for the front-line care that is so important both to the member opposite and myself.

Let me quote Dr. Willie Keon, a recently retired Conservative senator, world-renowned heart surgeon, and now chair of the Champlain LHIN. He says, "My love for health care transcends my political persuasions. I have"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Here are the facts: Since 2006, executive salaries at the Champlain LHIN and South West LHIN bloated from approximately \$350,000 a year to over \$1 million. Executive salaries ballooned from half a million to over one million dollars at LHINs in Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant, the Central, Central East and Central West regions, Erie St. Clair, Mississauga Halton, and the North West, South East and Waterloo Wellington LHINs. At the North East and North Simcoe Muskoka LHINs, executive salaries went from under a half-million dollars to almost \$2 million. Toronto Central LHIN went from wasting \$600,000 on executive bloat to a staggering \$2.3 million last year.

Minister, can't you see that the money that you divert to bloated salaries is better spent on front-line health care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What the member opposite knows but does not want to say is that LHINs actually spend 0.25% of the money they receive on their own planning; 99.75% of the money goes to that front-line care. In addition, it brings a local voice. The party opposite wants to shut down the local voice when it comes to health care decisions. They want to bring all that decision-making power back to Queen's Park.

I don't think the people in Thunder Bay want decisions affecting their care to be made in Toronto. I don't think the people in Windsor want the decisions affecting their local care to be made in Toronto. I think the people in Sudbury or Sarnia or Ottawa or Kingston or any of those places across this great and magnificent province want to make the decisions as close—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Premier. Buried in the government's massive budget bill are major changes to the Education Act which will allow for-profit child care operators to run the before- and after-school component of full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds. This was never part of Charles Pascal's vision for full-day learning and was not part of the minister's statements.

Why is the McGuinty government sneaking through this change which will undermine the quality and affordability of the before- and after-school program?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I was hoping that my honourable colleague would tell us how it is that he would have us make common cause so we can ensure that the

Conservative Party of Ontario does not put a death nail in full-day kindergarten in the province of Ontario. I was hoping that he was going to speak to that issue.

I can say that we are very much looking forward to moving ahead with full-day kindergarten. By 2014, it's going to benefit all 247,000 four- and five-year-olds in our province. It is one of the most important things that we have done with respect to ensuring that we are building the most highly skilled and educated workforce, I would argue, in decades. It puts us at the forefront in all of North America, and I look forward to speaking in a little bit more detail to the specifics of my honourable colleague's question in the supplementary.

1100

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Premier, it's one thing to allow not-for-profit community agencies to continue to provide already-established before- and after-school programs; it's quite another to open our schools to private daycare companies whose main goal is to minimize costs and maximize profits.

Child care experts at the Atkinson Foundation say that the government is completely remiss and that for-profit delivery will provide neither quality learning nor child care. You are undermining early learning programs.

Are you so ashamed of abandoning Pascal's recommendations that you had to make these changes to the Education Act in such a cowardly way?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think we've been talking about these kinds of changes for a long time and I'm pleased to have this opportunity to speak to them once again.

We have introduced what I think is the appropriate, responsible and, indeed, respectful flexibility that is warranted in this kind of initiative. We have talked to the school boards, the parents, our educators, including our early childhood educators, and we've introduced appropriate flexibility into the program.

We are ensuring that when it comes to our before- and after-school programs, they will ensure that more families have access to an integrated, high-quality before- and after-school program at the schools. They're going to have to follow the Ontario curriculum model that we put in place, and they're going to have to coordinate with the teaching and early childhood education that takes place. I'm proud to once again be at the forefront—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Bob Delaney: This question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. In the March 29 provincial budget, the Minister of Finance reported that Ontario has had five consecutive quarters of growth, higher business investment and a resurgent manufacturing sector, all evidence that the global economic downturn is behind us.

Ontario has recovered 93% of the jobs lost during the recession, and three quarters of those jobs are full-time

jobs. In Mississauga and across the 905 region, it's clear that Ontario is turning the corner.

The province has set an objective to create and retain 10,000 jobs. Minister, how will Ontario support the creation and retention of these jobs?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I'm delighted to have this question from the member from Mississauga—Streetsville, who has been a huge supporter of the Ontario government's move to work with business to create jobs here in Ontario. We've had a very good several weeks ever since this budget was tabled in this House and we'll be curious to see how the opposition members continue to support, or not, the initiatives of this government when it means real jobs for people.

Last week, we saw the announcement at Best Therapeutics: 100 new jobs in Ottawa, specifically for developing and manufacturing medical equipment used to treat cancer, and blood-making supplies. Protenergy Natural Foods in Richmond Hill: 60 new jobs announced last week manufacturing best packaging for these products, including soups, broths and sauces, in environmentally friendly packaging.

These kinds of initiatives—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Minister, in Mississauga, we can see that business earnings are up, volumes are growing, firms are hiring and people are getting back to work.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

Please continue.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Pratt and Whitney Canada, a world leader in the design, manufacture and service of gas turbine engines for the aerospace industry, has just announced an investment of \$139.2 million in new technology, equipment and R&D. That investment creates 80 new jobs in Mississauga. Concept Plastics, Canada's only car mat manufacturer, invested \$7.18 million to support the installation of new equipment.

Minister, what else is Ontario doing to attract businesses and provide an incentive to set up shop right here in Ontario?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I hope that people at home will realize that the budget that was tabled in this House just a couple of weeks ago is doing all that it can to attract business here in Ontario, and it's working. We're talking about one initiative that sees the Ontario government partner \$175 million to leverage \$1.3 billion of investment in this province and creating thousands of jobs, not just for people who need employment but for—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind the honourable member of a soccer analogy that he sent me a little note on last week, about cards.

Minister?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Thank you—and inviting businesses from around the world; showing them our tax policies and watching their eyes open with wonder at

how aggressive and competitive tax policy is right here in this province for making investments for business.

We're about creating jobs, and we marvel that the parties opposite have opposed every measure that we have created that is bringing real jobs to Ontarians today. We'll watch with interest to see what happens as our budget progresses, as we show—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Minister of Innovation. Last October, you were in Quebec City at the same time you became embroiled in a controversy over messages you posted on Twitter about our leader. But when you got back, you didn't post your flight or hotel for that trip. Did you just walk it off?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: No. This is a ministry that has contributed to growing 2,800 jobs, leading to one of the four largest clean tech companies. I travel on a very limited basis, and our ministry has met and exceeded every budget target it's been given by the government.

Finally, all—

Mr. Jeff Leal: How about that deputy mayor of Ottawa joining us?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Member from Peterborough, please come to order.

Please continue.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: All of my expenses have been submitted to the Integrity Commissioner. We've kept it up on an ongoing basis, and we're very proud of that. If the member ever wants to write me or request that directly, I'm quite happy to help her out with that.

I'm also really impressed by the opposition research—half-competent. I was chair of an agency, which the honourable Leader of the Opposition—I had one of the lowest per capita travel expenses ever. I travelled economy and I had a green footprint a fraction of what any other—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: When he stops talking, I'll start again.

The minister hasn't posted a single expense since last April. The minister, of course, has a rich history of running up expenses and having Ontario families and others pay the bill.

The Premier's announcement in September 2009 was before you came to this place, so I'm going to go through it again. The Premier at that time said, "From now on, expenses will be posted so families can know who exactly spent what exactly."

Why haven't you posted your expenses? Share with us.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: These folks are amazingly entertaining. All of my expenses have been sent through to the integrity process and are going through the process. They may not have noticed that I'm the newest member of cabinet. I'm quite happy any time—but let's

look at our friends over there. How was Las Vegas? Viva Las Vegas. While Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Tim Hudak spent your tax dollars on a conference in Las Vegas with a vice-presidential candidate, Dick Cheney; Tourism Minister Tim Hudak also went on a province-wide junket in the summer of 2001 and with his staff racked up over \$23,000 of expenses.

I have to admit, they have a lot to learn about managing expenses. Again, they don't like to compare my record to any of the Tory appointments in Ottawa. They're silent on that. They rack up expenses like—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question. The member—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I remind the honourable minister that when the Speaker stands, the member is expected to sit.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Nepean.

New question. The member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

INJURED WORKERS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Statistics show that quite simply the WSIB's former labour market re-entry program did not produce the intended results of making the worker re-employable. The former labour market re-entry program was audited in 2004. The audit found that a shamefully low 44% of completed programs resulted in the worker being re-employed.

Why has the WSIB implemented its new worker re-integration program, that appears destined to achieve the same dismal results as the former program?

1110

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question from across the way. The WSIB provides unfunded liability insurance or, I should say, insurance for employers and protection for workers. When it comes to the reintegration program, it's important that we do everything in our power to ensure that those employees who are injured on the job enable themselves to get back to work.

In the end, we want workers and employers to succeed in this system. We will continue to support those workers as they become injured.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: The WSIB arranged submissions on the worker reintegration program three months after it was implemented, leading to great difficulty correcting program faults. The Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups is concerned that there are many fatal flaws within the new worker reintegration program. For example, injured workers must be given the best available chance to return to paid employment, and a quality education is one of the steps necessary in achieving this goal. Why is this minister allowing the WSIB and its new worker re-

integration program to retrain injured workers to only a grade 9 level?

Hon. Charles Sousa: As the member across the way knows, we are now doing a review through the Harry Arthurs report to try to determine what best we can do support those workers. We are going to make changes and we want to achieve results to benefit those workers. We want to enable them to get back to work as soon as possible and as safely as possible.

I appreciate the question. We'll work together to try to find resolutions to help those employees.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question also for the Minister of Labour. Minister, Bill 160, the Occupational Health and Safety Statute Law Amendment Act, is currently before the Standing Committee on Social Policy. Bill 160 is a culmination of the final recommendations made by Tony Dean and the expert advisory panel. These recommendations were the result of deliberations and consensus amongst panel members. They included labour reps, employer reps, as well as academics.

To the minister: Can you please tell this House how Bill 160 could change the landscape of health and safety in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you to the member from Oakville. I am pleased that we are moving forward with the changes to our health and safety system that will benefit Ontario workers and help ensure safety in our workplace. This proposed legislation, Bill 160, is about laying the foundation and building the framework to a new and more effective occupational health and safety system in Ontario.

If passed, the bill will enable our government to appoint a new chief prevention officer to coordinate and align the prevention system. It will also create a new prevention council with representatives from labour, employers and safety experts to advise the chief prevention officer and the minister. The bill would put in place the right framework to allow us to further implement the panel's other recommendations.

Bill 160 proposes the most significant changes to the prevention system in over 30 years. That will result in safer workplaces in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the minister for that update.

Minister, the expert advisory panel made a number of, I think, very progressive recommendations, some of which the ministry is already actively implementing. As an update to the House, Minister, can you please tell this House the status of those recommendations and those that are currently being implemented?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member is absolutely right: We are working on implementing other key recommendations made by the panel. We are improving the way we deal with workplace reprisals by broadening the approach to enforcement and to facilitating compliance, including

making resource materials available about where employers can go to fix safety hazards.

In February, I spoke in this House about the newly appointed interim prevention council. I continue to work closely with that council. We're consulting and taking into consideration the expert advice from this diverse group of individuals and health and safety professionals as we continue to enhance safe and healthy workplaces. I'm committed, as we all are, to ensuring that we put in place the right framework within which we can continue to implement the vision of the expert advisory panel.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture. The agriculture budget this year is down \$52.6 million from what was budgeted last year.

If you don't need legislation to implement a business risk management program, and clearly you don't, since it's not in the budget bill; if you don't need federal support, and you clearly don't, because you finally proceeded without it; and if you don't need more money because you cut the agriculture budget this year, can you explain to the agricultural organizations that worked so hard to develop the risk management program why you let farmers suffer so long before you implemented it?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I'm very pleased to rise and talk about the good work of the coalition and the good work of our Ontario farmers. We have been working with our farmers for years to develop programs that work for them. These are programs developed by farmers for farmers, and what they do is they start to address the concerns raised from the farms that the current suite of programs by the federal government don't work for our farmers. Why don't they work? They don't give the predictability, the stability and the bankability that our farmers need today.

When we think about the work that has been done by our farmers to develop business risk programs, this piece is critical in enhancing—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Minister, you know that our caucus has been supporting a business risk management program for years and working with the farmers to promote it. While you were dragging your heels, meanwhile, there were—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Members will please come to order. Your minister wants to hear the question. Minister of Consumer Services, Minister of Finance, Minister of Community Safety.

Please continue.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Minister, while farmers were relying on food banks to feed their families, and young beginning farmers were being forced out of business, that's what you were doing—waiting. Even your former parliamentary assistant asked here in the Legislature two weeks ago why you couldn't have done this sooner.

Minister, will you apologize to the farmers for once again waiting until an election year to give them the support they deserve all the time?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I'm very pleased to rise to this. When we think about what our farmers need in order to ensure that they stay on the land, I put our record up against the members from across the way, who cut the ag budget, shut down the offices and turned their backs on farmers while they left the land.

Let's look at this side of the House. What have we done? We've brought forward risk management programs across the non-supply-managed sector, which they voted against.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Oxford, you just asked the question. The member from Nepean—the honourable member understands the standing orders, and that any time a member is not satisfied with an answer, they can file a late show.

Minister?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: We look at the commitment in the budget to our farmers, and that is unprecedented. We have not seen this transformation in 25 years. For the members to vote against the farmers on programs that they've worked hard for—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Last week, Ontarians learned about yet another family struggling to get a loved one home after falling ill on vacation. Mr. Horace Moore is stuck in Florida in a hospital because there are no ICU beds available in Toronto or Mississauga. For a month, Mr. Moore and his family have been stuck out of country, paying thousands of dollars in living expenses and putting their lives on hold. They are desperate to get their father home.

Can the Premier tell this family when this will finally happen? When will they finally be able to bring their father home?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.
1120

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thanks for the question. This clearly is an issue that is of concern to all of us. I think all of us who have parents who spend time out of the country during the winter months or family members out of the country are concerned when we hear stories about this.

What I want to say is this: It's very, very important that, when people leave Ontario, they purchase health insurance. It's very important. It's also important that people understand that it's the responsibility of the insurance company to find a place in Ontario to receive the person who has fallen ill out of the country.

We're working with the insurance industry so they understand how the system works, but it is the responsibility of the insurance company.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This minister's response is a disgrace. This family has insurance, and all of the examples we have used are of families that have insurance.

Sadly, the Moore family is not the only family that's been put through an ordeal like this, and the minister should know it. We've heard from many families who dared to go public and many more who felt they couldn't go public because they thought it might jeopardize their opportunity to actually get a bed.

The Premier would rather blame the families. His minister would rather blame the families, asserting that, perhaps, they were doing something wrong when they've been doing everything right, instead of looking at the actions and the failings of their own government to solve this problem.

When will the Premier actually do something to prevent families from being subject to this kind of abuse?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I very much object to the characterization expressed by the member opposite. I think it's really unfair to all the people who work in our health care system.

I want to make it very clear: The referrals to hospitals are done by the insurance companies. There is capacity in our system, and it is the responsibility of the insurance companies to work with hospitals in Ontario to get patients transferred.

As I said in the first question, we are working with the insurance industry so they understand how the system works, so they can better serve Ontario residents who need to come home.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is also for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, we all know the McGuinty government is committed to ensuring that Ontarians are able to receive high-quality health care in a timely manner and as close to home as possible.

There have been multiple examples of this government moving forward with initiatives that speak to this commitment. Last week, regulations were passed which will improve services that are provided by optometrists and will decrease wait times for Ontarians. In Strathroy, my own optometrist has spoken to me about the need for these changes.

Minister, could you tell Ontarians more about these new regulations and what additional services they can expect the next time they meet with their own optometrist?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'd like to thank the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for the question. For members from all sides of the House who have raised this issue with me, I am very pleased that Ontario's optometrists are now going to be able to help treat Ontarians by prescribing certain medications. It's a very big step forward for the profession of optometry, and it's great news for Ontarians.

Optometrists will be able to prescribe medications to treat minor eye ailments and, in certain cases, glaucoma.

This will have significant benefits for the people of Ontario. It means they will spend less time going to medical appointments because their optometrist can take care of the problem in a single visit. It means better access to eye care closer to home, particularly in rural Ontario, where few ophthalmologists practise. It also means our ophthalmologists will spend less time taking appointments simply to write prescriptions and have more time to treat more serious eye ailments. It's—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: This is not the only significant expansion of medical services announced by the McGuinty government in the past week. Last Friday, Premier McGuinty announced the expansion of the scope of care and responsibilities for our talented nurse practitioners. Nurse practitioners are vital to rural health care and have been a welcome addition to the hospitals and the communities that they work in.

Minister, can you tell the House more about the new responsibilities that nurse practitioners will have in our health care system?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Again, thank you for the question. I'm very happy to have the opportunity to talk more about Ontario's nurse practitioners and the new responsibilities they will be able to take on in our hospitals.

Ontario's nurse practitioners are leaders in their field. This change will make Ontario the first province to allow them to admit and discharge hospital patients. It will help speed up the discharging of patients and get them home to their families sooner. It will also take some demands off physicians and our hospitals.

Over the last few years, we have greatly expanded the role of nurse practitioners in Ontario, with the announcement of 25 new nurse practitioner-led clinics across the province. Both of these expansions greatly benefit Ontarians. I'm very, very proud of the progress we've been able to make when it comes to nurse practitioners.

HYDRO RATES

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, you continue to put the rental housing stock in jeopardy by not fixing your own legislation that, through the Residential Tenancies Act, requires that residential landlords provide to prospective tenants information regarding the electricity consumption of the rental unit for the 12-month period before they enter the proposed tenancy.

Toronto has the most rental housing units in the province, and yet Toronto Hydro is not complying with regulation 389/10, detailing that they shall provide this requested information to landlords. Your Catch-22 means that landlords are breaking the law by not providing this information. They can't get it. Will you fix this oversight today?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I just want to say how proud I am of our legislation. It's legislation that's balanced. It's legislation that's fair. It's legislation that understands that landlords have rights but tenants have rights as well. It

isn't biased legislation. It isn't ignoring the needs of one group. Our legislation, unlike their legislation, has balance to it. That's what we're about. That what the people of Ontario want. They want balance in legislation, not legislation that's skewed, not legislation that doesn't represent one side. They want legislation that's balanced, that's strong, that represents the rights of both sides and understands the rights of both sides. Our legislation is like that, unlike their legislation when they were in power.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: It's clear that the left hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing.

You know that there is an oversight in the suite-metering legislation. Your ministry met with small business landlords on February 17, and nothing has been done. Landlords are being told they must provide the information; hydro providers are not complying because they don't want to breach privacy policies. You continue to gamble with Ontario's rental housing stock by dismissing the serious problems that these landlords are facing.

Will you do what you should have done immediately after the February 17 meeting and fix this problem?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: What is abundantly clear in our legislation is that there is an understanding that, in any entity, there is a left hand and there is a right hand, unlike their legislation, which only understood the point of view of one side. Our legislation isn't like that. We make no apologies for that. We understand that both parties have to ensure—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the honourable members to please come to order.

Please continue.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I think that I can truly say that I speak for the people of Ontario, who want balance in legislation. They want strength in legislation. They want understanding in legislation. They want to ensure that both sides are heard in legislation. Unlike that side that had skewed legislation when they were in power, our legislation is balanced, and the people of Ontario are proud of that.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Premier. The Premier will have received dozens of letters from the people of Sioux Lookout protesting against the McGuinty government's decision to take away the crown wood supply of the Hudson sawmill, effectively shutting the sawmill and permanently destroying 600 good jobs.

My question: How does the McGuinty government justify killing 600 good jobs in a sawmill that has operated for over 30 years and is the largest employer in the Sioux Lookout area?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry.

1130

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I appreciate the question. Certainly one thing that needs to be said is that the wood

supply competition—we've had over 1,000 jobs that have been created or retained as a result of this, and 19 offers have been accepted all across the north.

But that is not to say that we are not very sensitive to the challenges faced by those communities which were not successful in terms of this process, which has been done in an absolutely transparent and fair way under the guidance of a Fairness Commissioner.

I do want to say, related to McKenzie Forest Products, that we had an opportunity for them to meet with our senior ministry officials this past Friday. I understand that it was a challenging meeting but also a productive meeting, and we want to continue to work with the community. The important thing to perhaps note too is that it's important that this is done in a fair and balanced way and that there's no influence by a minister in terms of making a decision, because I'll tell you, if I had my way, I'd probably award wood to everybody who asked for it, which would not be an acceptable way to do things.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I heard a lot of words, but I definitely didn't hear an answer.

The decision makes no sense. This is a mill that was operating within the last year. You're denying it a wood supply while you're providing other mills that haven't operated in two or three years a wood supply. I say again, this decision makes no sense to anyone.

But the minister mentions the community, so I want to ask the minister this: Rather than take away the wood supply, why don't you award the wood supply to the town of Sioux Lookout and allow them to look for an operator that may be more financially viable? Why are you so determined to take away the wood supply, destroy the largest employer in the community and kill 600 jobs?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: When we began the wood supply process a year or so ago, we basically made available about nine million, almost 10 million, cubic metres of wood. Generally speaking, this was crown fibre that was not being harvested. We wanted to be able to get that wood back to work, and I appreciate that the McKenzie mill was open for a period of time, but substantially it had been closed over the last three years.

The long and the short is, we had 115 applications go forward and a wood supply process that has indeed seen 1,000 jobs created or retained. We've got 19 accepted offers.

Last week, I had the great pleasure of awarding 100,000-plus cubic metres to two First Nations in the Beardmore and Nipigon area, creating 20 jobs to build a pellet plant—a wonderful new opportunity.

So I'm very sensitive to the situation, certainly in terms of the impact on Sioux Lookout. I say to the member: He knows that. That's why we're working so closely with the community. We're doing the very best we can to continue to work in a positive way with the community.

FAMILY LAW

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is for the Attorney General. I'm sure all members have heard, as I have, dif-

difficult stories from constituents involved in Family Court. We are keenly aware that the system can be difficult to navigate, particularly when going through emotional, life-changing events like divorce or child custody disputes. People in these circumstances often put the highest concern on the well-being of their children and want to know how they can get access to reliable information early in the process so that they can make the best possible decisions for their families during a difficult time.

I know, over the past year, the government has begun offering an information service to families at certain courthouses in the greater Toronto area. Can the Attorney General tell us and the families we represent what our government is doing to make sure that families in my riding of Ottawa Centre and across Ontario have access to the information they need in order to make informed decisions in family law matters?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member for Ottawa Centre raises a very important issue, and he has brought these concerns to my attention in the past. That's why we have launched a four-pillar reform of the family law system.

It all begins with knowledge. You know, information—knowledge—really is power, and people who aren't lawyers or judges need additional information in an easy-to-understand form about what they're going to face when they enter the family law system. It can be very intimidating at a very emotional and difficult period of time.

The first pillar of the reform is a mandatory information system: Make sure that everybody who's going to enter the family law system knows what they're facing; what community supports might be available; what additional supports there are, in terms of legal advice and mediation; and what effect this might have on their children. It's all about making sure people are prepared for the justice system they're about to face.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Many people feel that the justice system can be overly costly and confrontational, particularly when dealing with family disputes. The process is also seen to be overly complicated and inaccessible to people. For some, it may be the only time in their lives when they encounter the justice system, and they are doing so at a time when they may have a lot at stake and tensions are high.

I know that throughout Ontario, many communities have counselling or support services that are available to help families when going through these difficult times.

Can the Attorney General tell us what the government is doing to ensure families know where to turn in their communities for support? How can we make our family justice system less confrontational to the benefit of thousands of families in difficult circumstances?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member is right: When families are facing a family law crisis, it's a deeply emotional time—very difficult decision. Part of the reforms are to take the emotion out of the fight, take the emotion out of the issues. In addition to the mandatory

information program, we're providing additional opportunities to mediate or facilitate the resolution of issues without the full court fight. We're providing additional opportunities to have legal advice early on in the process, either through the legal aid plan or through one-stop shops we're setting up in six different locations. This has already come into force in all of our unified sites April 1; it will be in every site by the end of summer. It's good for families, good for the system of justice.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended. There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1136 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

JOHN ARNOLD TORY

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Quiet, humble, gentle, modest: This is how John A. Tory, one of Canada's most distinguished business leaders, has been remembered since he passed away on April 2 in Florida with his family at his side.

John A. Tory guided and advised some of Canada's largest companies, including the Thomson family empire expansion into a powerful multinational company and Rogers Communications into a communications empire. As well, he co-founded a leading Canadian law firm with his father and brother.

Throughout his remarkable career in law and business, he remained a man of integrity and an extraordinarily gentle person who put others ahead of himself. He and his wife, Liz, set an example when it came to giving back to their community by generously supporting such causes as the AGO, CAMH and Sunnybrook Hospital.

However, his greatest joy in life was his family: his wife, Liz, of 58 years; his four children, including John, who served with us here in this Legislature as leader of the official opposition; his grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

On behalf of everyone in this Legislature, I extend my sincere and deepest condolences to his family. This extraordinary man who led an exemplary life leaves an outstanding legacy. May the foundation of his advice on any subject—a set of values rooted in excellence, integrity and humanity—be an example for us all to follow.

HOCKEY

Mr. Michael Prue: Each year, young people in East York play for the Stanley Cup at the Stan Wadlow arena. They've been doing that for 55 years. The teams that they play for all are named after familiar teams that we would all know, NHL teams: Toronto Maple Leafs, Montreal Canadiens, Detroit Red Wings and the like. The jerseys that they wear are absolutely similar. The young people play with all of their heart.

On Saturday, April 2, the games began first thing in the morning. The highlight, of course, of every season is playing for the little Stanley Cup. When you look at this, it is an exact replica, although a little bit smaller than the original Stanley Cup; it's in sterling silver. The authority to have the cup was granted by Clarence Campbell who was then, at that time in 1954-55, president of the NHL.

This year, the final match was Toronto Maple Leafs versus Detroit Red Wings—a very hard-fought game, but it was eventually won by Toronto. The team hoisted the cup as it skated around the rink. Perhaps, just maybe, this is the harbinger of things to come for the more senior team who hasn't had that kind of luck for 44 years. The kids in East York had a wonderful day.

My congratulations to the coaches, the parents, the referees and everyone who makes this happen year after year. It truly is a highlight of our community.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Jeff Leal: Today, I wish to acknowledge the outstanding work done by our government and my colleague the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. I had the great pleasure of welcoming Minister Mitchell to Peterborough riding on Tuesday, April 5, to meet with local farmers to discuss our risk management program announced in our budget of March 29.

This year's budget should have been titled the Farm Budget, because there has not been as important an agricultural program developed in Ontario for 30 years. The announcement of a permanent risk management program is good news for Ontario's farmers and farm families.

Farmers can now count on stable financial support when prices for their products fluctuate due to unpredictable factors such as weather and global market changes, one more example of our government helping farmers through difficult times.

This budget supports the hard work on the part of Ontario's farmers: programs by farmers, for farmers.

I want to recognize Edgar Cornish and his colleagues in the Peterborough County Cattleman's Association who developed this model. Ontario's farm organization leaders deserve to be congratulated for a job well done. They have all worked exceptionally hard.

SAMUEL HOLLAND

Mr. Frank Klees: I rise to correct, for the record, a statement I made during debate on Dutch Heritage Month on Thursday, March 24, 2011. During my remarks, I stated that the Holland Marsh was named after Major Samuel Johannes Holland. That is correct.

I went on to say, based on incorrect information, that he was not Dutch. That is not correct, and I want to thank Mr. Albert van der Heide, publisher of the Windmill Herald, for bringing this to my attention and for ensuring that the record is clarified.

Mr. van der Heide pointed out that Samuel Holland was in fact born in 1728 in the eastern part of the Nether-

lands, in the province of Overijssel, where Mr. van der Heide spent his early years before coming to Canada in 1964.

In 1745, Samuel Holland joined the Dutch artillery and then left his native country for Britain, where he became a major in the British Army and a military surveyor and cartographer. The consistent excellence of his engineering skills led to Holland's appointment as Canada's first surveyor general. Holland did the earliest survey of the land that was to be named for him, the Holland Marsh. The area he put on the map would, more than 140 years later, be settled and developed by people from his country and would become the vegetable basket of Ontario, contributing about \$1 billion to the provincial economy annually.

I trust that this correction serves to reconnect Samuel Holland to his Dutch roots, as Mr. van der Heide requested.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Kuldip Kular: It's a great pleasure to share with my colleagues the news that a leading manufacturer in my riding has become the single largest commercial purchaser of renewable energy in Canada.

On Wednesday of last week, I was joined by Ontario's Minister of the Environment; John Coyne and Godfrey Lee of Unilever; and Tom Heintzman of Bullfrog Power to announce the green energy partnership between these two companies.

Impressively, this commitment to renewable energy will reduce Unilever Canada's carbon dioxide emissions by 7,554 tonnes a year. This is roughly equivalent to removing 1,500 cars from the road.

I want to express my thanks to Unilever for seeing an opportunity to make a difference in Ontario and for leading by example. I'm certain that other companies in Bramalea-Gore-Malton will be encouraged by this news and will find ways to reduce their own carbon footprints.

Importantly, this announcement is a sign that Ontario's green energy sector is growing and that we, as a society, are becoming a sustainable one. We are closer than ever to closing the last of our coal-powered generating plants.

I would also like to thank the Premier and the Minister of the Environment for their leadership in making Ontario a healthier, greener place to live, work and raise our families.

GEORGE MECH

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm delighted today to recognize my former colleague and very good friend George Mech. George and I worked at General Motors for over 30 years, and I know him to have given and made a very dedicated contribution through many years of service.

George retired 42 years ago, and now he's devoting his time and talents to building his community, as is evidenced by his volunteer work. George dedicated himself

to the local Kiwanis Club, where he was appointed chair of the Young Children: Priority One program. He worked tirelessly to improve services for children both locally and abroad.

Some time ago, George was instrumental in organizing breakfast programs for students at four Durham region schools. Not content to stop there, he began organizing the Builders Club at the same schools. Their successful projects have ranged from reducing vandalism to improving youth literacy. One Builders Club project of which he could be particularly proud is the no-touch program, which has gone a long way to eliminating bullying in our schools.

For his many contributions to children in his community, the Kiwanis Foundation of Canada recently presented George with the prestigious Mel Osborne Fellowship award for devotion and distinguished service to community.

I'd invite members to recognize George, who is visiting here in the gallery, to give him some credit for the work he has done and to say hello to his wife, Doris, who could not visit us today. Welcome, George. Thank you.

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PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Mr. Dave Levac: Today marks World Parkinson Day, an important day during Parkinson's Awareness Month.

As you are aware, Speaker, Parkinson's touches me within my family. My brother Norm has Parkinson's disease, and I have watched and supported him in his battle for years, along with his loving and caring wife, Debbie, and their children, Josh and Hannah. With the rest of his five brothers and sister, we watch and support.

Strikingly, approximately 40,000 Ontarians like my brother are living with Parkinson's. Today and throughout the month of April, dedicated volunteers are working in communities across the province to raise awareness and funds to help people with this debilitating disease and their families.

What I have come to learn is that we need to understand neurological conditions like Parkinson's better, and we need to ensure that people living with neurological conditions have the support they need to live their full lives and maintain their independence and their quality of life.

Last week, Parkinson Society volunteers sent every member a pot of tulips to remind us that Ontarians with Parkinson's are calling for a provincial brain strategy to address their needs and those of more than two million Ontarians living with neurological conditions. I encourage all of my colleagues to support this call to action. Far too many people live with this condition and know that we have not done enough yet. I commit to them that I shall continue to work to see that day when we have that strategy in place.

ROBOTICS COMPETITION

Mr. Bob Delaney: On Saturday, April 2, I joined our most promising young scientists, programmers and

inventors at the FIRST robotics competition held at Mississauga's Hershey Centre. This annual North America-wide competition gives high school students the opportunity to explore technology and make it do something practical. Teams of students have a problem to solve and have to do it by making a robot and teaching computer logic to the robot to accomplish the task. Students learn and apply world-class skills.

Ontario has committed \$3 million over five years to support FIRST Robotics Canada. As a physics grad, a weekend programmer and a bit of a science guy myself, I admire the enthusiasm, the ingenuity and the innovation of our future scientists, engineers and computer programmers. They solved the FIRST robotics problem with ingenuity, and they overcame the limitations of time, knowledge and resources, just as they will need to do in real science today.

Congratulations especially to students from our western Mississauga schools: Rick Hansen senior secondary, West Credit secondary and St. Joan of Arc secondary schools.

Executive director Mark Breadner and his team worked hard to organize an impressive event that opens young minds to the excitement of science.

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Phil McNeely: I wish to speak to the residents of Ottawa-Orléans, the whole city of Ottawa and the province and let them know how far this government has come with uploading the services downloaded by the Harris-Hudak government in the 1990s. The historical support—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the honourable member of the reference to previous governments.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I withdraw.

The historical support provided to municipalities since 2003 is found on page 131 of the budget. The uploading was negotiated with municipalities by then-Minister Watson and has a significant impact on a municipality's capacity to balance services delivery within reasonable municipal tax increases.

For Ottawa and Orléans, the total uploading is about 7% of the provincial total uploaded since 2003, a full \$2 billion. That is \$140 million for Ottawa. One per cent of the tax bill in Ottawa is about \$10 million. This uploading means that the tax bills for city residents are 14% lower than they would be without the uploading, and the uploading of services continues. When looking at the higher energy costs, this action by the province must be considered by residents. Another \$1 billion is planned to be uploaded by the province and off the municipal tax bills by 2018.

Our budget is focused on providing excellent education and health care, environmental protection and economic development. It provides the right balance as Ontario moves forward after the devastating recession.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 140, An Act to enact the Housing Services Act, 2011, repeal the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 140, Loi édictant la Loi de 2011 sur les services de logement, abrogeant la Loi de 2000 sur la réforme du logement social et apportant des modifications corrélatives et autres à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

PETITIONS

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the members of the Legislature of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms states that everyone has freedom of conscience and religion, freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication; freedom of peaceful assembly; and freedom of association;

"Whereas concerns have been raised from a broad spectrum of citizens and political parties about the conduct of the Ontario Human Rights Commission and tribunal;

"Whereas Canadian courts have never said that human rights codes are necessary; and

"Whereas there are other commissions, laws and codes that already exist to address genuine violations of human rights;

"Therefore we call upon the Legislature of Ontario to stand up for our freedoms by repealing the Ontario Human Rights Code and permanently disbanding the Ontario Human Rights Commission and tribunal."

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present one of thousands of petitions from my riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and a duty to protect the Oak Ridges moraine"—as we all do; "and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier government to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permit process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries; and

"Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to prevent contamination of the Oak Ridges moraine," especially on Lakeridge Road or Morgans Road in my riding of Durham.

I'm pleased to sign this and present it to Jia Jia, one of the pages.

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: Just to get this clearly on the record, I have another petition here that reads:

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty is increasing taxes yet again with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it;

"Whereas, by 2010, Dalton McGuinty's new tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day. A few examples include: coffee, newspapers and magazines; gas for the car, home heating oil and electricity; haircuts, dry cleaning and personal grooming and personal care; home renovations and home services; veterinary care and pet care; legal services, the sale of resale homes, and funeral arrangements;" and the list goes on.

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003 election. However, in 2004, he brought in the health tax"—or the premium—"which costs upwards of \$600 to \$900 per individual. And now he is back at it raising taxes again;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario's current economic reality and stop raising taxes on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses," and pay attention to the economy.

I'm pleased to sign it, support it and give it to Gemma, one of the pages on her last week here at Queen's Park.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

Mr. Ted Arnott: This petition is to the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: 97% of collective agreements are settled without a strike or lockout; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

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"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have received a petition from Consumer Federation Canada, and it is very dear to my heart. It's addressed to the Parliament of Ontario and the Minister of Government Services.

"Whereas identity theft is the fastest-growing crime in North America;

"Whereas confidential and private information is being stolen on a regular basis, affecting literally thousands of people;

"Whereas the cost of this crime exceeds billions of dollars;

"Whereas countless hours are wasted to restore one's good credit rating;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that Bill 38, which passed the second reading unanimously in the Ontario Legislature ... be brought before committee and that the following issues be included for consideration and debate:

"(1) All consumer reports should be provided in a truncated (masked-out) form, protecting our vital private information such as SIN and loan account numbers.

"(2) Should a consumer reporting agency discover that there has been an unlawful disclosure of consumer information, the agency should immediately inform the affected consumer.

"(3) The consumer reporting agency shall only report credit inquiry records resulting from actual applications for credit or increase of credit, except in a report given to the consumer.

"(4) The consumer reporting agency shall investigate disputed information within 30 days and correct, supplement or automatically delete any information found unconfirmed, incomplete or inaccurate."

Mr. Speaker, since I agree, I'm delighted to send you this information and this petition.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John O'Toole: This is another series of petitions from my riding of Durham which reads as follows:

"Whereas industrial wind turbine developments have raised concerns among citizens over health, safety and property values;

"Whereas the Green Energy Act"—Bill 150—"allows wind turbine developments to bypass meaningful public input and municipal approvals;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:"

"That the Minister of the Environment" and Minister of Energy "revise the Green Energy Act to allow full public input and municipal approvals on all industrial wind farm developments and that a moratorium on wind development be declared until an independent, epidemiological study is completed into the health and environmental impacts of industrial wind turbines" in my riding of Durham.

I'm pleased to sign it and support it and send it with one of the pages here at Queen's Park.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have another petition that speaks directly to the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, Bill 56. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the growing number of unlawful firearms in motor vehicles is threatening innocent citizens and our police officers;

"Whereas police officers, military personnel and lawfully licensed persons are the only people allowed to possess firearms; and

"Whereas a growing number of unlawful firearms are transported, smuggled and being found in motor vehicles; and

"Whereas impounding motor vehicles and suspending driver's licences of persons possessing unlawful firearms would aid the police in their efforts to make our streets safer;

"We, the undersigned citizens, strongly request and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 56, entitled the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2008, into law, so that we can reduce the number of crimes involving unlawful firearms in our communities."

Again, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to sign this petition, because I agree with it, and send it to you with Emma.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition signed by a great number of constituents in Oxford and other ridings around it. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas multiple industrial wind farm projects are being considered by the government of Ontario in the absence of independent, scientific studies on the long-term effects on the health of residents living near industrial wind farms;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the government of Ontario to put a moratorium on any renewable energy approvals for the construction of

industrial wind farms in the province of Ontario until such time as it can be demonstrated that all reasonable concerns regarding the long-term effects on the health of residents living near industrial wind farms have been fully studied and addressed.”

Thank you very much for allowing me to present this petition on their behalf.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have another petition to the Legislature of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas multiple industrial wind farm projects are being considered by the government of Ontario in the absence of independent, scientific studies on the long-term effects on the health of residents living near industrial wind farms;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the government of Ontario to put a moratorium on any renewable energy approvals for the construction of industrial wind farms in the province of Ontario until such time as it can be demonstrated that all reasonable concerns regarding the long-term effects on the health of residents living near industrial wind farms have been fully studied and addressed.”

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Mr. Speaker, I have one more petition for you. It’s called “Fairness for Ontario Workers: Employment Insurance,” and it’s addressed to the Parliament of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the federal government’s employment insurance surplus now stands at \$54 billion,” and rising; and

“Whereas over 60% of Ontario’s unemployed are not eligible for employment insurance because of Ottawa’s unfair eligibility rules; and

“Whereas an Ontario worker has to work more weeks to qualify and receives fewer weeks of benefits than other Canadian unemployed workers; and

“Whereas the average Ontario unemployed worker gets \$4,000 less in EI benefits than unemployed workers in other provinces and thus not qualifying for many retraining programs;

“We, the undersigned,” petition the Parliament of Ontario “to press the federal government to reform the employment insurance program and to end the discrimination and unfairness towards Ontario’s unemployed workers.”

I agree with this and am delighted to sign this petition.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. John O’Toole: I always like to have fresh petitions, so this one—I’m digging it out here.

“Whereas gasoline prices have increased at alarming rates during the past while; and

“Whereas the gasoline prices are higher” in some areas compared with others, causing hardship for working families; and

“Whereas the high gasoline prices adversely affect the economy of the province and result in increasing job losses;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“(1) That the McGuinty government immediately freeze gasoline prices until world oil prices moderate; and

“(2) That the McGuinty government immediately reduce the” HST “on gasoline until world oil prices moderate; and

“(3) That the McGuinty government immediately initiate a royal commission to investigate the predatory gas prices charged by oil companies operating in Ontario.”

I am pleased to present this on behalf of my constituents to Kiruthika, one of the legislative pages here.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Ted Arnott: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus support public health care and protecting access to front-line care; and

“Whereas Ontario families have already given Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which was wasted on the \$1-billion eHealth scandal; and

“Whereas now the McGuinty Liberals are cutting front-line public health care and putting independent pharmacies at risk; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty’s cuts will:

“—reduce pharmacy hours during evenings and weekends;

“—increase wait times and lineups for patients;

“—increase the out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery; and

“—reduce critical patient health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the McGuinty government stop its cuts to pharmacies.”

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ORDERS OF THE DAY

BETTER TOMORROW FOR ONTARIO ACT

(BUDGET MEASURES), 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR DES LENDEMAINS MEILLEURS POUR L’ONTARIO (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 7, 2011, on the motion for second reading of Bill 173, An Act

respecting 2011 Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters / *Projet de loi 173, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires de 2011, l'affectation anticipée de crédits et d'autres questions.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I will be sharing my time with the member for Toronto Centre.

I'm very pleased, actually, to be able to stand up and speak to Bill 173, which is our budget bill. For myself, it was certainly a very important day, and I think for many of my constituents it was as well.

We talked about a number of things in the bill, including maintaining the progress that we've made in health care and the progress we've made in education, and we talked about the importance of eliminating the deficit without impacting those areas. We talked about a number of new things that we're doing in terms of health care, such as the breast cancer screening exams and the extension of those. But for myself, first as a member of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, the mental health announcement for a strategy for children and youth was very important to me, and it made a great difference to hear that we were going to be moving forward with that.

Another thing that I certainly found very exciting is—I don't know if I'd say "semi-retired farmer"; I'm not quite sure what the classification is these days, when your son is doing the actual farming but you're still heavily involved in the operation and the finances of that farm. But I was certainly very pleased when we started to talk about the extension of the business risk management program, and certainly the implementation of a risk management program for farmers in the livestock area as well, the non-supplied areas. Those were important announcements, and for myself, like I said, very exciting.

As a farmer who is in the supply-managed sector, I was very pleased for the non-supply-managed farmers. I have been working with the agricultural community not just as a farmer—but also having worked with the farm organizations and worked as a representative of one of those farm organizations for many years, I have known of the need for something that would secure for the farmers in the non-supply-managed sector the kinds of security that supply management enjoys.

It was particularly important because we had a coalition of all farm organizations and commodity groups that pushed for this. OASC came to the minister, came to us and came to all members of Parliament, quite frankly, and asked them to make the program not only extended to the livestock producers but to also make it a permanent program for grains and oilseeds.

I had the opportunity to be at the very beginning of that particular process, where the farmers themselves started to create the program. They were the ones who came forward. They did the work. I can well remember some of the meetings that were held in my riding among farmers in the grains and oilseeds sector, who had at that point gone through a number of years of very low prices. It had become increasingly difficult for them to go to the

bank, to secure operating loans so that they could continue to do their business. It had become difficult for them to do a business plan, because they couldn't predict what their prices were going to be, and of course, there's the whole issue of stability for these producers. I think everyone wants to have a certain amount of stability in their life, even though we all know that as farmers we are in a business and there is fluctuation in the business from year to year. You still need to have some kind of stability in your business, and that's what most of these farmers were looking for.

I talked to people like Leo Guilbeault, who is a farmer from Essex county. Leo was instrumental in working on the program for grains and oilseeds. As a government, we initially started that as a pilot project to see how it would work. We wanted to know if farmers would truly take up the program; they did, with great enthusiasm. We extended it by another year. The farmers stayed the course with us, and not only that, but as I say, they formed a coalition of farm organizations and commodity groups to ensure that it was extended to the other producers as well.

When we saw that happening, we felt that not only was this a program that was working well, we knew that the farmers had the ability to speak with one voice. I have to be honest: Farmers are a very independent group of people, and sometimes getting farmers to agree on something is like herding cats. We can agree for a while, and then somebody says something a little contradictory and everybody goes off in a different direction. That didn't happen this time, which tells me that the farmers understood not only the importance of speaking with one voice, but all agreed on the importance of having a business risk management program.

We moved forward with that as a government. I can honestly say it's the very first time that I recall that farmers were instrumental in the development of a program. Most often, as farmers, we end up responding. The government comes forward with the program. They very often may do consultations, but very often it is someone else who creates the program, someone else who crunches the numbers and then comes to the farmers and says, "This is the program we're going to offer."

That's not the case in this one. In this one, as I said, there were farmers, like Leo, who were instrumental in developing the program. They did the number crunching. They went into the farm situations. They knew the business plans. They did the work. They came to us with those things, and we accepted that. For the farm community, that is very important. As I said, it's the first time that I can honestly remember that that ever happened.

I want to say thank you to those producers because they were instrumental in bringing this forward. Without them, without their support of the program and without their consistent support of the program, it would have been a little bit more difficult, but it certainly is something that we have done as a government and that I'm very proud of. I want to say thank you to all those producers who stayed the course on this one because it's the farmers who made this happen.

The other part of the budget bill that I want to talk about is the whole issue around mental health and, in particular, a strategy for children and youth in mental health.

As we travelled the province as members of the select committee, the one thing we heard over and over again from people was the importance of early intervention. Very often, people were telling us about situations that really first presented themselves when the individual was a child and the thought that, had something been done earlier, they could have saved an entire life of anguish and pain for these people. So it's important for us to be moving forward on this.

Like I say, I'm particularly pleased, and I certainly want to thank the member, and I'm not sure—Christine Elliott—

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Whitby—Oshawa.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Whitby—Oshawa; thank you, Christine. I want to address you properly but I couldn't quite remember. Thank you for bringing forward the motion that created the select committee because that was what started us rolling into something that is very important. The more we heard from our own constituents and the more we heard from Ontarians about this program and about the need for something that was going to address mental health, the more urgent it became for us on the committee.

As we move forward with this, I'm really particularly pleased that we are starting with children and youth, because I am a firm believer that early intervention is critical, that you can save so many lives by doing that at the appropriate time rather than trying to catch up as the person progresses through their life. I say that this is not just about having a strategy; it's also about putting the dollars there. Those are very important because we all knew, as we went through, that we need to change the system, but that's not going to happen without some kind of assistance in a monetary sense. We have moved forward with this.

When I was listening to the budget speech, those were the two things that really struck me, because they were both things that I feel very personally about. They were very important to me. I'm so terribly happy that we were able to address those.

At this point, I'm going to leave the next 10 minutes and turn these over to our member for Toronto Centre. I want to thank you, Speaker, for this opportunity to speak in support of Bill 173.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Minister of Research and Innovation.

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Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you very much to my colleague for the opportunity.

There's a fundamental change in the economy that I think Premier McGuinty has recognized over several years now, I would say probably ahead of many others, and that is that the very nature of how wealth and prosperity is being generated in Ontario and around the world has changed. For many of our listeners at home, when we

think back to the year we were born—I was born in 1957—two thirds of Canadians worked in manufacturing. They made things for a living. Conrad Hilton famously said at that time that the three most important business decisions were location, location, location. It would be hard to imagine today a more different economy and a more different world. If we have a philosophical breach with the Conservative Party opposite, it is over this fundamental economic question where we fundamentally disagree with them.

Today, 80% of the jobs that are being created are jobs where people don't make anything—they don't make appliances. They don't do that anymore. That's not where most of our jobs are coming from. Eighty per cent of our jobs are in engineering, science, performance, design, financing, managing, invention. It is a dynamic economy that has emerged in Ontario that is unlike any economy that occurred previous to it, and unlike the economies that exist in many other parts of the world.

It is interesting that it is actually this new innovation economy in which wealth is generated in different ways than it was that is causing governments the greatest public policy challenges. In an innovation economy, wealth is generated by people's knowledge and by their capacity to invent and reinvent. For example, we are one of the two largest clean tech clusters. This is in membrane technology and UV technology.

Our auto sector, which has recovered faster than anywhere else I can find in the world, has been creating 8,000 jobs in the last few years, recovering those jobs, and paying back their loans to this government five years ahead of schedule. What's interesting to me is that one of the people who actually does understand this is Jim Flaherty, our Minister of Finance. I wish his party here actually understood it.

One of the reasons that the HST is so important is because it reduces the cost of investments in production lines, in technology and in training. It ends a cascading sales tax that was a job killer in Canada for many years. While that would have been a nice thing to do five or 10 years ago, it is absolutely critical for one very good reason: Because for the years that we've been in government, we've been dealing mostly with a dollar at parity. When the party opposite was in government, they were at a 65-cent dollar or a 70-cent dollar. They had a built-in subsidy for foreign exports. Given the importance of the US economy to driving the Canadian economy, one would think that they would be more sensitive to that.

This budget continues a very strong commitment in a number of areas, and one of them is in education—doubling the amount of student aid, adding 200,000 seats to our universities. To give you an idea of how big 200,000 new seats in the Ontario college and university system is, the University of Toronto, our largest institution, is only 75,000 seats. We have added and will soon have probably added more than two and a half University of Torontos.

We have also brought down the tax burden, and we are building the tax base: \$12 billion in tax reductions for Ontario families and \$4.8 billion for Ontario businesses.

To drive a knowledge economy, it is the relationship between innovation and the production or manufacturing economy that's so important, and closing our productivity gap. It is interesting that the manufacturing that is now growing in Ontario very dynamically, again, is a very different type of manufacturing than existed 10 or 15 years ago. Companies like Linamar and Magna have emerged as the most dynamic and successful auto companies. My friend Linda Hasenfratz, who's the president and CEO and a brilliant business leader, makes this point every day: When you go to the Hasenfratz centre for technology or you go to Kitchener-Waterloo and you see the Communtech centre or the innovation centre in Guelph or the private sector equivalents—is the amount of money and time that is being put in by every employee at Linamar, where they reinvent their product line. That's called advanced manufacturing.

We just opened up a centre in Burlington, a partnership with a company there called EcoSynthetix, which is a \$7-million partnership, where that company will now reinvent nanotechnology coatings through a perpetual line of experiments which will allow them to produce a new line of products almost quarterly.

In Cobourg, Ontario, we just yesterday announced 350 jobs with my friend Lou Rinaldi, who is the member out there for the Northumberland area. That company is now using advanced technology and advanced materials to produce new products every quarter for new customers, and has opened up an expanded international market at a rate that is incredible.

For mid-sized cities like Cobourg and suburban 905 communities like Burlington, these are the communities that previously saw job flight. We are now seeing in mid-sized communities across Ontario the restoration of high-value innovation and high-value advanced manufacturing jobs at an unprecedented level.

What the opposition party does not understand is that Ontarians have done this without a recovery in the United States. One of the greatest reasons I believe in this government's economic policy is because for the first time in Ontario's history, we have a full recovery. We are weeks away from 100% job recovery. We had 3.6% GDP growth in Ontario last year, and if you go back and Google the last year we had 3.6% GDP growth in Ontario, you have to go back decades.

No recovery in the US; a full recovery in Ontario: 1.9% GDP growth, 15% job growth.

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The only way you could screw this up is to elect those people in October. That's the only way that you could actually screw this up.

If they would just agree with their federal cousins on tax policy, because their federal cousins have gotten two things right: the HST and reducing tax on assembly parts. That's why Samsung is here. Samsung creates a supply chain. Maybe they should get some folks over there who have run a successful business in the last 10 years. I go out and speak to 17 CEOs of companies who all tell me that the HST has put over half a billion dollars in there.

What's going to happen? We have just governed through the worst time. Ontarians have stepped up and been counted. In the next two or three years, the US economy is going to come roaring back to life.

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: If they just listened a little bit, it would be helpful.

I'm going to suggest that they read something, a great piece by Michael Porter on creating shared value. It's on the front cover of the Harvard Business Review. In that, he compliments Canada and he makes the point that sometime in the next 12, 18 or 24 months, the US economy is going to come roaring back to life. What will that mean? That will mean great demand for Ontario goods in the US economy.

We are better positioned. We have modernized the plants. We have seen the largest per capita investments in R&D coming out of this recession. We have now got 68% of Ontarians with university educations. We are starting the early childhood education. We have put green technology and microFITs on 10,000 farms. We have introduced risk management and stabilized the situation for farmers. While I represent a large urban centre, I spent my adolescent years in Alexandria, Ontario, milking cows and working on a family farm. I know what risk management does. That's the other thing that I'm particularly proud about in this budget.

The incredibly ridiculous things the party opposite did: closing 28 hospitals. How do you close 28 hospitals and shut down 500,000 affordable housing projects? We added 19 new hospitals and 100 new capital projects. Those hospitals and those research facilities are now doing 80% of the life sciences research. We have had a breakthrough in autism. We have had a breakthrough in skin cells. We have had a breakthrough in stem cells. We are now one of the leading centres in stem cell research. This 4.5% of companies in Ontario coming out of the recession, these innovation companies, which now have the highest level of public sector invested R&D, now being matched by huge complementary jobs by the private sector, are generating over 50% of the new jobs.

The Premier talked about innovation five years ago. Ontario is seeing one out of every two new jobs in one of the fastest-growing economies in the Americas right now because of that. I don't think you get a budget that's better than this or compares more favourably—

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: There's a good example. I hope people ask for a copy of this transcript. He said it's never been better. Well, I'll tell you some facts. We've got the largest debt, we've increased spending—doubled it—we've doubled the debt, we've doubled the deficit, and you think that's good business. I can tell you, my constituents know what good business is: It's having some respect for taxpayers.

A member of cabinet—so outlandish. You should stand and apologize to the people of Ontario—

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: And then resign.

Mr. John O'Toole: And then resign, exactly. Always apologize before you resign.

I do have some time for the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. She knows that Ernie Hardeman had it right. Ernie Hardeman has been preaching the last two years about the risk management plan, with a passion that I hear in caucus from Tim Hudak about trying to take care of working families in Ontario. I don't mean the Working Families that are working for the Liberals; I mean hard-working Ontario families. They're frightened, Madam Speaker, to open their electricity bills. You know that yourself; I've heard you speak of it at your other job here.

The point here is that we have a minister of cabinet saying that things are okay. They're not. We're in trouble. They say they've recovered all the jobs. Since the date they use as a reference point, about two million people have moved to Ontario. All I hear is about jobs and opportunity and the lack of opportunity for our youth. They have the highest tuition in the country—and they think everything is okay.

I hope the Premier is listening today, because health care is hemorrhaging. Mental health: There's not a dollar in here of any substance for this. There's nothing here of any great consequence. They've cut almost everything that they can until after this election. This government here—Ontario should be forewarned. Honest to God, if this election in October—they're not admitting how serious it is here in Ontario. This government here has taken us from the best to the last. It's just tragic, and the minister thinks it's okay.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise today to salute the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. I do empathize with you somewhat finding yourself semi-retired, but we have had some good conversations. She is right to point out that in every budget there has to be at least something good that can be said about it. There's the old adage that even a broken clock is right twice a day, and the Liberals are right twice in this budget, both in how they've helped the farmers and the money that has been made available for mental health. No one is going to deny that that is a good part of this budget, but you're not going to hear any more. I know what's going to happen: I'm going to be quoted without the “however,” just like you do every day in the Legislature when you quote me—without the “however.”

But there is a “however,” and that is that the government has got it all wrong when it comes to tax policy. I listened to the Minister of Research and Innovation, and he talked about how all of this is creating so many jobs. The reality is that it is not. It is one of the worst ways to spend money to create jobs, as the economists will tell you. If you invest a billion dollars in almost any other way, you're going to create more jobs than are being created by this government with its tax policy.

As an example—and I have a list here from Jim Stanford, and I'm going to be talking about it when I have a

chance to speak—if you put the money into supporting the unemployed and low income, you're going to create six times as many jobs. If you do infrastructure, you're going to create six times as many jobs; or housing, five and a half times as many jobs. If you do a personal income tax reduction, that too is going to create nearly five times as many jobs as giving it away to corporations. Even EI premium reductions are twice as good at creating jobs.

This government has the whole policy wrong in terms of job creation. They're giving money away to people who don't need it and creating no—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's my pleasure to join in the debate and to comment on the comments by the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and the member from Toronto Centre. I'll start there. The member from Toronto Centre is our esteemed Minister of Research and Innovation. He talked about education, he talked about different things that are happening in our communities across the province, and he did reference Waterloo region—of course, Kitchener-Conestoga is part of that area—and the massive amount of advancements that this minister has made in terms of nanotechnology. Nanotechnology is 10 to the minus ninth—things that small—and the innovation we're able to do as a government and as partnerships in this province is outstanding. The centre of nanotechnology at the University of Waterloo is again a result of this minister's hard work.

He also talked about manufacturing and jobs—we heard the comment about jobs just now. Here are some actual jobs that are coming to the province as a result of this government's investment in this budget. Pratt and Whitney Canada, which is a world leader in design and manufacturing, as we heard the minister talk about, is creating 80 new jobs in Mississauga, investing in new technology and new research and innovation.

Best Theratronics Ltd., which is a developer, manufacturing medical equipment used to treat cancer and make blood supplies safer, is creating 100 new jobs in Ottawa, improving existing product lines and continuing to develop their lines of technology.

Sungrow Canada, a manufacturer of equipment for the clean solar power industry, is creating 50 new jobs right here in Vaughan and making that their North American headquarters. So we are in fact creating real jobs, and those are examples of those real jobs.

I did want to talk about risk management, which the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex spoke about, but in my 10 seconds I just want to acknowledge the mental health strategy that is benefiting our youth up to 18 years of age in this province. As they sit in the gallery, we see the importance.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, as well as the Minister of Research and Innovation.

The Minister of Research and Innovation mentioned the Samsung deal, and all it does is infuriate people. I have to tell you, Madam Speaker, that on the weekend, as the member from Durham would know, I was with the Malloys. Dianne Malloy was saying exactly what was happening regarding her hydro bills and what is taking place and the impacts that are occurring there, and Mrs. Fennell as well—I saw Allan on the weekend.

They've created an environment now where, as Mrs. Fennell was saying, she's just appalled at the hydro smart meters, and it wasn't for a reason I had figured until she brought it to my attention. She said, "You know, I'm confined to the house on the weekend now. I'm stuck doing all my laundry and everything on the weekend now." What has taken place is that this change with these time-of-day rates and everything else has now put her in a position where she as the person taking care of those aspects is spending every weekend doing nothing but laundry and everything else, which is having a huge impact on the economy. Not only that, but it's the individuals and their lifestyle who are being impacted. Where once it used to be that in the evening you would get some of it done and move on from there, lo and behold, here she is on the weekend just taking care of that.

The member from Kitchener-Conestoga mentioned nanotechnology as a result of the Minister of Research and Innovation's hard work. Quite frankly, I don't necessarily see that in my reality, and the reason for that is because I work with a number of organizations. One in Richmond Hill has been doing nanotechnology for an extensive number of years. They produce bubbles at a nano level where if we took this glass of water—sorry to be using that—and ran that water through this technology, it would fill the glass right back to the top at a nano level. It's being used in hydroponics and many other aspects in the province of Ontario. But it's the business people who are making the decisions and creating the jobs, not the current government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex has up to two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I want to thank the members from Durham, Beaches-East York, Kitchener-Conestoga and Oshawa for their comments.

I am actually a little bit surprised to hear the member from Durham say that the member from Oxford somehow went pushing for this. My interpretation of what has happened around the risk management program is that the member from Oxford actually sort of saw which direction the bandwagon was going and jumped on.

I can honestly say that if he had done that, if he ever really consulted with farmers when he was Minister of Agriculture, we would still have our OMAF offices in our counties. They would not have been taken from us. We would have advisers who would assist us now in doing things we need to do in order to modernize our farms, in order to make sure we're in compliance with the expectations of society. Those things didn't happen.

Nobody asked the farmers when we were talking about closing the OMAF offices. As a matter of fact,

farmers were very adamant about wanting to go keep those offices, and they couldn't get them. Instead, we as farmers now have to go to the private sector for that kind of advice. We have to pay for that kind of advice. We have to decide whether what we're getting is actually not biased by the fact that this adviser may have a financial interest in the advice that they're giving.

We were very pleased to have had those offices, and when they were taken away, our communities were very upset because we used those offices on a regular basis. But you, as a government, decided we weren't going to have them anymore, so you took them away. So please, don't pat yourselves on the back as having listened to the farmers and responded to them, because that's the very last thing you did.

1400

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: On behalf of the people of Wellington-Halton Hills, I'm pleased to speak today to Bill 173, An Act respecting 2011 Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters.

As you are well aware, Madam Speaker, there is considerable latitude extended to members during debate on the government's budget bills. This has been the case for many years, given that the provincial budget extends to every policy and activity under the purview of the provincial government. This debate, therefore, is a good opportunity for members of this Legislature to raise almost any issue affecting the people of our respective constituencies and our great province.

Bill 173 is the first bill arising from the provincial budget, which the Minister of Finance presented in this House on March 29. When I spoke last week on the budget motion, I indicated my belief that this budget will be the government's last budget, and deservedly so. That's because this budget fails to meet two important tests: the test of content and the test of credibility. It is on both tests a miserable failure of leadership.

First I will speak about its content. Many people would have hoped that this government would show they were listening to everyday Ontario families, their concerns and their aspirations. This government has watched with seeming indifference as their cost of living, including taxes that they pay to the provincial government, has gone way up.

Increases in taxes, hydro bills and the cost of gasoline have become a major burden for many people, particularly our seniors on fixed incomes. We're hearing it all the time, and no doubt the government members are hearing it too in their ridings. I'm hearing it right across my riding, from Centre Wellington to Erin, from Puslinch to Guelph-Eramosa to Halton Hills. People are fed up, not only because their costs keep going up, but because they believe, quite rightly, that the provincial government has no credible plan to address these problems and, as I mentioned, that the provincial government is indifferent to their plight.

Instead of providing solutions, the finance minister provided a vindictive attack against the official oppos-

ition in his budget speech. In my 21 years in the Legislature, I've never seen a performance quite like it. It was unprecedented in its presentation; irresponsible, even reprehensible, in its tone and content. He actually implied that our party, if elected, would cut health care, lay off 33,000 teachers and reduce the number of doctors by 12,000—he went on and on—all of which is 100% false.

It's too bad the minister didn't spend a little less time attacking the opposition and a little more time defending and explaining his hydro rates. If the minister is so interested in compare-and-contrast exercises, we're more than happy to respond. People need an accurate response.

In the past eight years, the Premier's policies have contributed to Ontario's decline. We were once a leader in Confederation; today we are a laggard in Confederation. We are a have-not province, receiving equalization payments, in effect, from Newfoundland. In contrast, the Leader of the Opposition believes we can do better. With the right policies, he would encourage growth in the economy. He offers real change from the mistakes of the past and a chance at a better future for all of us.

The Premier believes election promises are meant to be broken and that people will forget, or forgive if they think your intentions are good. In contrast, the Leader of the Opposition will not promise what he knows he can't deliver. He understands credibility is hard-earned and effective leadership requires mutual trust.

The Premier's overall government spending has us on the road to a financial crisis. The provincial debt has almost doubled under his watch. They are borrowing almost \$1.86 million an hour, every hour of every day. That's more than \$31,000 a minute, or about \$516 a second. In contrast, the Leader of the Opposition will set priorities, reduce spending to affordable levels and work towards balancing the provincial budget so that we're living within our means again. The Premier does not hesitate to raise taxes, even when he has promised he won't. In contrast, the Leader of the Opposition wants to reduce taxes.

The Premier has lost touch with the cares of the average Ontario family. In contrast, the Leader of the Opposition respects and stands up for hard-working Ontario families. That is the real comparison that voters will be making in about six months' time.

To the Minister of Finance, I would suggest that he should have known to include in the budget speech even a single mention of one of those voters' most pressing concerns: the high and rising cost of hydro. At least twice, I've told this House about a constituent and mother who wrote to me, unsolicited, to say that she would have to choose between paying her hydro bill and going to the grocery store. Her message reads as follows:

"I'm probably sending this out to deaf ears or to someone who might not care, but it's worth a try.

"I'm a single mother and work hard for everything I bring to the table. I ask for no handouts and am proud that I can raise my son on my own. I do have a very tight budget, and having electric heat puts a real strain on my

son and I, especially in the winter months that are upon us....

"Question: Do I keep my son's tummy full or do I keep him warm, you tell me because HST is going to affect my hydro bill big this year. I'm really concerned about how much I have to subtract from my grocery bill in order to keep the house warm and my son from getting sick.... I don't know where to turn but I'm sure hoping you can help."

Again I say, in this province of abundance, such circumstances should be unheard of, but under this government they are becoming increasingly common.

Hydro prices, by the government's own admission, will rise another 46% over the next five years, and after that, bills will rise another 10% as the Ontario clean energy benefit expires. These facts come straight from the government's own fall economic statement, pages 11 and 12. It's another example of how this government's budget does not address the real challenges facing our family budgets. Instead, they continue their expensive energy experiments no matter what the cost, no matter how strong the opposition.

The Minister of the Environment continues to make inconsistent statements and comments regarding industrial wind farms, fueling confusion and anger on the part of communities across Ontario, including those in his own riding, who believe, with good reason, that he just isn't listening to their concerns. In contrast, my position has been this: First, there should be a moratorium on new wind farm developments until a comprehensive health study is completed. Second, we must restore the municipal planning authority stripped by this government's Green Energy Act.

As municipalities are quickly finding out, this government's promises of consultation are just not to be trusted. The government is very good at ramming through its own big spending programs, but they usually come at the expense of priorities that our municipalities identify as most important to their communities. In many cases, municipalities have been advocating for priorities—priorities that require provincial assistance—for many years, and often to deaf ears. Just south of Guelph, the Highway 6 realignment project—or the Morriston bypass, as it's known locally—is a perfect example. This much-needed highway has been on the books for the Ministry of Transportation for decades. For some 30 years, Puslinch township has asked the government to start construction, but there always seems to be some excuse for dithering and delay. This year, the government plans to increase spending on provincial highway infrastructure to more than \$2.1 billion. Surely they could find room to fund this project, which is critical to the movement of people and goods in our part of the province.

It's a similar story on health care, one of the most important responsibilities of the provincial government. This budget shows government expenditures of over \$2.5 billion on hospital infrastructure. Surely, with such large-scale investment planned, they could find room to fund our community's key priorities. For almost four years,

I've been calling upon the government to allow Groves Memorial Community Hospital in Centre Wellington to move forward to the next stage of planning for the new facility we will need. Surely they could identify that key priority. And surely within a budget of over \$2.5 billion, they could find what's needed to provide meaningful support to Georgetown hospital, to move ahead with their plans for a new emergency room and CT scanner.

Of course, these priorities might be more easily met if the government hadn't diverted precious health care resources from infrastructure and front-line care, where they're most needed, to excessive bureaucracy, as we see with the local health integration networks, the LHINs, and most egregiously with the eHealth scandal. But that, unfortunately, has been the story of this government: more spending, more waste and fewer results for taxpayers. Over and over, this government has spent without restraint as long as they believe it will win them votes. With government spending that's out of control, the result is always higher taxes or higher debt, or both.

We're told that this government has ramped up spending by an astounding 77% since they assumed office. Meanwhile, in the same period, we're told that Ontario's economy grew by only 9%. As the Leader of the Opposition has said, "You can't run your house that way, you can't run your business that way, and we can no longer continue to run the province of Ontario that way." He is absolutely right.

1410

Also correct is the Waterloo Region Record in its editorial of March 30, which says that the Liberal budget "represents a colossal lost opportunity to tackle the most serious economic threat facing this province—its massive, surging and crippling debt."

The editorial goes on to say: "During their eight years in office, the Liberals have been too willing to live with annual deficits that drove up Ontario's debt by 74%—from \$138.8 billion in 2003-04 to \$241.4 billion in the coming year. They have never lacked a vision to introduce new programs, simply a plan to pay for it all. That is a major oversight."

"What makes this trend more alarming is the government's willingness to continue piling on new debt" to the mountain it has already built. "It plans to continue running annual deficits until 2017-18. By then, according to its own predictions, Ontario's debt will have risen to a \$307.5-billion Matterhorn casting its chilling shadow over the entire province."

"Debt may not be on the radar screens of most Ontarians. It should. In the coming year's budget, Ontario will spend \$10.2 billion merely to service its debt. After health and education, that stands as the province's third greatest expenditure. If interest rates rise, as they are expected to later this year, debt costs will become even more burdensome. And as more of each tax dollar goes to fund debt and less for programs and services, taxpayers will increasingly feel cheated."

"Moreover, the Liberals are taking a risky gamble in allowing the debt to continue its upward spiral for the

next six years. By then, Ontario could be engulfed in yet another economic downturn—which could necessitate new stimulus spending and even higher debt."

This is a colossal failure on the part of this government. Our children will spend their working years paying for this Liberal legacy of debt, and they deserve better.

What does the Minister of Finance have to say? How does he intend to come to grips with his shameful legacy of spiralling spending? He pledges to restrain spending growth to just 1%. What a preposterous claim. Who do they think they're kidding?

Again, I would quote the Record: "It is the same government that increased program spending by 62% since taking power (from \$70.1 billion in 2003-04 to \$113.7 billion this year) and now suddenly thinks it can limit annual program spending increases to 1.0%. Considering that Ontario's aging population will demand more health care, not less, such budget dreams are hued in Technicolor."

That's what I meant when I said at the outset that this government has failed to meet the test of credibility. Year after year, this government has rapidly ramped up the debt, and now they promise to limit their spending increases to just 1% a year? This number is indeed hued in Technicolor. It's a work of fiction, arguably even a fantasy, and without a doubt, inevitably it will prove to be a failure. That is the history of this government.

History also tells us that this government, when faced with a fiscal problem of its own making, won't hesitate to raise taxes. They say they won't raise taxes, but nobody believes them anymore. After promising not to raise taxes in the election of 2003, they brought in the so-called health tax, a misnomer to be sure, because of course, as we know, the money goes directly into the consolidated revenue fund and is not directly tied to health care.

Again promising not to raise taxes in the election of 2007, they brought in the HST, raising taxes on essentials like heat, hydro and gasoline. After promising not to raise taxes, they brought in a wide range of fees, including, of course, that dreaded eco tax; again, another mess of this government's own making. They've done it before, and, if given the chance, they'll raise taxes again.

If re-elected next October, the McGuinty Liberals would, I assert, raise the HST by between two and five percentage points: It would go from 13% to between 15% and 18%. After all, we've effectively seen a 15% sales tax before, until the federal government lowered the GST from its former level of 7% down to 5%. Other countries have value-added taxes higher than ours, most notably Britain, with its current 20% value-added tax rate.

The budget document offers nothing that will rebuild trust in this government. It shows that if given the chance, this government will raise taxes again. It's not a matter of if; it's a matter of when and it's a matter of how. Will it be an overt tax increase or a backdoor tax increase of even higher eco fees, never-ending debt retirement charges or even higher hydro rates? They just won't say.

The budget provides little in the way of reassurance to Ontario families who are struggling, families who are anxious about their future and their children's future. They're asking: How high will interest rates rise? Will I be able to afford my mortgage payments? Will I be able to afford to stay in my home? How much higher will gas prices rise? Will I be able to afford to fill up the tank? How much higher will hydro rates go? Will I be able to heat my home? For how long will I have a job? Will I be able to earn enough to support my family? People are asking these questions in my riding and across the province, in many cases more seriously and sincerely than ever before, yet the budget pays them no recognition and offers no reason for them to trust this government. On the contrary to the name of the budget bill, it will most certainly not lead to a better tomorrow for Ontario if this policy is continued.

Fortunately, there is hope for a better tomorrow, and that will come with a better government in October. As the people compare and contrast their options, here is what I believe they will find: They will see that while they have made Ontario a laggard in Confederation and a have-not province, we believe that the right policies will support economic growth, moving away from the mistakes of the past. They'll see that their record is littered with broken promises and shattered potential. We will not promise what we know we can't deliver. They'll see that credibility is hard-earned and effective leadership requires mutual trust. They'll see that while they put us on the road to financial ruin, nearly doubling the debt, we will set priorities, reduce spending to affordable levels and work towards balancing the provincial budget so that we are living within our means once again. They'll see that while they have no hesitation in raising taxes, we want to reduce taxes. They'll see that while they have lost touch with average people and families, we will stand up for hard-working Ontario families. They'll see that while they offer the promise of an Ontario in perpetual decline, we offer the promise of a prosperous and better future for all Ontarians.

That will be the contrast. On that basis, people will render their decision.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Wellington-Halton Hills. He spoke passionately and, I think, well. He talked about and had a pretty good analysis of where this budget is, what it's going to accomplish and what it is not going to accomplish.

In this place, there's often much hyperbole coming from government benches about everything being all rosy, everything being all good—the number of jobs that are being created, getting back almost the number of jobs that were lost. But the reality is, for so many people who live out there, they're not seeing that happen to them. They are not seeing any real improvements in their lives. If they are lucky enough to hold on to a job, they're seeing that the real wages have not increased at all since 1991—that's the last time that people's wages actually

outpaced inflation—so that most people, during the life of this entire government, are no better off, and most of them are in fact worse off, than they were when the Liberals were first elected in 2003. They are worse off because they are having to pay taxes that are new to them.

Of course, one bandies about and one hears most often about the HST. I'm constantly amazed, when I go out to events big and small, political and non-political people, that it's always the HST. It is the albatross around this government's neck, which they continue to say is a wonderful thing. I am surprised that they get away with it.

Even today, there was a little seminar across the street being put on by the Society of Energy Professionals. He was talking about how electricity was priced in Ontario, and then he got to the point about the HST and it being a 13% extra tax that people are having to pay and how it of itself is the major reason that people's prices for electricity have gone up, and how the public has reacted to them.

This is a man who makes his living on that, and I'm telling you, the government should be very worried about what they've done.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from Wellington-Halton Hills for his comments. I especially want to spend a little bit of time talking about his comments in relation to the deficit and debt numbers that he referenced in his speech. I thank him for his remarks. I think what was left out of the remarks, however, was any context for how Ontario, as well as Canada, other provinces and the United States and all their subnational governments there, arrived in the situations that they are in.

1420

Most people realize and understand that we've just gone through the greatest recession since the Great Depression, as it is described. It has always struck me, as a member of a provincial government, how, on the federal level, Stephen Harper and the people over there in our national government are somehow still perceived as being these magicians when it comes to financial management for the country. And yet, when you think about what their total debt number was, their total in-year deficit, I believe they peaked—their one-year high was over \$60 billion—I'm looking at my friend from Whitby-Oshawa; I'm not trying to throw any darts here—over \$60 billion. In Ontario, our number came in at about \$19 billion. So if you think about Ontario as being about 40% of the total economy of Canada, and when you compare the total deficit numbers in Ontario to those of our national government, I'd have to think you could see quite easily that most jurisdictions, most governments, found themselves in some very difficult circumstances. So somehow, Stephen Harper and the federal Conservatives come off as great financial managers and we here in the province of Ontario apparently can't manage the budget. I just wanted to put that on the record, though I know they don't think so.

I also wanted to mention that he spoke a little bit about health care. I can tell you some examples in Thunder Bay. My riding is Thunder Bay–Atikokan. In health care, the improvements that we have seen locally in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan are significant. I'm especially proud of the angioplasty program that has seen 500 to 600 people now not have to leave our community and travel to southern Ontario. Twenty-nine hundred more doctors have been hired in the province since we came to government. Total spending has gone from \$30 billion to \$46 billion in the time we've been in government. About 900,000 to one million more people are now finding care through a primary care provider as well as a nurse practitioner-led clinic that took 3,200 orphan patients off the street.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'd like to congratulate my colleague the member from Wellington–Halton Hills, who I believe has really set out the true economic picture in Ontario right now, and it's not a really pretty picture. I suspect that's why, in his budget speech, the Minister of Finance spent an inordinate amount of time attacking us for what he perceived to be decisions that we would make with respect to health care and education spending—all just a bunch of fearmongering and not at all true.

The fact of the matter here is that this is a government that just can't stop spending. Their out-of-control spending has resulted in a doubling of the debt in Ontario since they took over in 2003. Imagine all of the debt that accumulated up to Confederation. That has been doubled in about eight years. It's ridiculous.

As the member from Wellington–Halton Hills wisely pointed out, the fact is that we're now spending 10 cents of every dollar on interest payments to other governments, to other entities that we've borrowed money from, which makes it the third priority in spending besides health care and education, over time. That's while interest rates are low. Imagine when interest rates rise, as we know they inevitably will. That's going to be a real financial disaster for Ontario.

That's why we keep talking about things like getting the deficit under control, getting the debt under control. It's so important for our children and grandchildren, so that we can continue to spend on things like education, like health care.

We have a government right now that's spending \$1 billion on the eHealth fiasco, where we're still looking for something to happen there; \$1 billion wasted; \$250 million spent—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order. Member from Peterborough.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: —on local health integration networks that are doing nothing to improve front-line health care but are all about increasing executive salaries and not making any kind of difference to the bottom line.

With respect to education spending, we need to make sure that we continue to spend. We need to spend time

too on the children who need our help, children with special needs, who right now are not getting the attention they deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I want to zero in on a couple of the things that my colleague from Wellington–Halton Hills said in his speech. In particular, I want to focus on the HST.

I think he's quite correct when he says that for many people in Ontario, their incomes are actually less now than their income was, say, three or four years ago, so a lot of families in Ontario actually have less money in their pocket month by month.

The other reality that people are facing is that one of the necessities of life if you're going to live in this so-called modern world, the electricity bill, has skyrocketed through the roof. It is not unusual to see people who had a hydro bill of, say, \$150 a month six or seven years ago now looking at \$400 a month, even \$500 a month. Then when you add the HST on top of that, there's further escalation.

So people who have less money in their pocket—and I'm talking here overwhelmingly of modest and middle-income families—are being told by this government that they have to find, between the hydro bill, the heating bill and the overall impact of the HST, another \$2,000 or \$3,000 a year. The reality for people is that they simply do not have it. A simple increase of \$100 a month in the hydro bill is \$1,200 a year. A \$200-a-month increase in the hydro bill is \$2,400 a year.

This government doesn't seem to get it. They're hitting people when they have less money, and people can't afford it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Wellington–Halton Hills has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to reply briefly to the members for Beaches–East York, Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Whitby–Oshawa and Kenora–Rainy River. Of course, I think all of us would relish an opportunity to continue to debate these issues, but I want to express my appreciation to those members who responded to my remarks.

I do wish to reply to the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan because he seemed to want to make a gratuitous attack against the federal government, use this opportunity to complain about the federal government in an attempt to divert attention away from his government's record. Of course, we're here to debate the provincial levels, not the federal ones, primarily, and we are here to debate the fiscal record of this government.

Again, I would refer all members, if they haven't read the budget papers, this document that came with the budget speech itself, to pages 204 and 205, where you see the government's so-called plan to eliminate the deficit. I've raised this many times in the House in recent months to ask government members to explain how they're going to keep spending increases to 1% or less per year. I have never received an explanation.

That gives us, really, the conclusion that we've drawn, which is that they have no alternative but to raise taxes if they form the government again. The fact is, right now, the \$16.3-billion deficit that they're projecting for 2011-12, which is such a large number that very few of us can get our heads around it, means that the government is currently borrowing \$1.86 million an hour, every hour, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year—almost \$2 million an hour. That's what a deficit of \$16.3 billion means.

If the government isn't prepared to acknowledge that fact and to come forward with a more credible and honest budget which will deal with this issue and confront it head on, then the people of Ontario will have no choice but to elect a new government on October 6.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: This is a horrendous budget. As I said earlier, it had two bright and shiny things in it—and no one is going to say that they weren't bright and shiny—if you are a farmer or if you or a loved one has need of mental health services. There is something in the budget for those two groups, and I will be the first to admit it. But the rest of the budget is horrendous.

Come the inevitable vote, I know that Liberals will be saying, "Oh, there's the NDP voting against progressive measures that will help farmers and will help those with mental health issues." We will vote against this budget because of everything else it contains, not with the budget because it has two good things in it.

With this budget, the government stands there proud of having nearly \$17 billion in deficit—\$17 billion, the largest deficit in the history of this province. They put Bob Rae to shame: double, triple whatever happened then. I remember the Liberals screaming in those days, not because I was here in this Legislature but because it was on the front page of the newspaper every day. It doesn't seem to bother them today.

This is a horrendous budget because there is no help whatsoever for those who are most in need in Ontario, no help at all.

April 1 was also the day the new measures for the special diet allowance were introduced. It was also the day that the government began its many cutbacks for those who are most truly in need. And there was nothing there at all. I'm going to deal with that.

1430

This is a horrendous budget because of the huge corporate tax giveaways that aren't going to do a single thing and are probably the least capable instruments that a government has to create jobs.

It is a horrendous budget because this government has chosen to do nothing about runaway CEO salaries or to put a cap or a hard limit on them.

It is a horrendous budget because it will allow for the first time for the privatizing of child care programs in our schools—after-school programs—and I think that Charles Pascal, who authorized that report on which the government relies so much, must be just a little more than miffed when he sees that.

It is a horrendous budget—as all budgets, this government is very good at hiding things in budgets. It took me nearly a week to find out that there is a schedule 17 of the budget, which contains the Gaming Control Act, where the government's changing all of the ways in which people gamble in Ontario. It's a really meaty act, schedule 17, and the government's changing all of that under the guise of a budget. Everybody's looking at what's in it, but they aren't looking at how the government is completely changing and ramping up revenues they're hoping to get from gaming.

It is a horrendous budget because it institutes, in really technical terms, the continuation of P3s.

To deal with each of these in turn, the \$17 billion is unsustainable. This government knows it. This government is talking in the long term—how they're going to try to ease that down and down and over the period of five or six years get it back to zero again. But this government is totally responsible for the deficit which they have put upon the people of Ontario, a deficit for which we are paying millions of dollars—as was said—per hour in interest rates. That's what this government has done, and this budget did nothing to help it get out of that.

I remember when this government stood up and had a plan—and I actually voted with and celebrated with the now Minister of Health when we were going to do something to ease those who lived in poverty. I remember that day. I remember having at least some hope that a few people who found themselves living in poverty would be helped by this government. And 2008 is a good year to remember because the Daily Bread Food Bank just came out with this report, and it shows that each and every year since 2008 the number of people going to food banks has increased. So as this government talks about how they're reducing or studying ways to reduce poverty, in fact, every single year food bank usage is going up.

Who's it going up for? Not so much for children, I will admit that, but it's going up for the elderly, it's going up for single people, it's going up for the disabled, it's going up for all of those people who are on the margins of our society. All of those groups, 25 in 5 and all of them who came here in 2008 with such hope that this government finally was going to do something, must be extremely disappointed.

They believed with all their hearts that something would happen, and they see that all that has happened is that they are being studied and studied and studied again, and that there is nothing, when the government has to come down and say which side they're on in the budget, for them. There's lots of money for corporate CEOs, and there's lots of money to reduce corporate taxes, but there's nothing for them except increased use of food banks. There's no new housing, there's no new programs, no real opportunities, and they're just looking at how bad things are going to be for them.

There's nothing in this budget that's going to help cities—nothing at all. There was some money in past budgets which still hasn't been spent. I'm looking at Toronto and its horrible new plan for subway develop-

ment, dreamed up on the back of a postcard by the now mayor of the city of Toronto—and the government falls all over themselves to agree with that. Instead of instituting and saying that they're going to pay for a forward-looking plan like Metrolinx, they have nothing at all. This budget has done nothing for cities, towns or villages from one side of this province to another.

Then we have the whole thing of, why is all this happening? It's happening because of these huge corporate tax giveaways. I listened to the Minister of Infrastructure today. The same old lines; the same lines that mean nothing at all: the creation of 50 jobs here or 50 jobs there, as if the money that he was giving away was creating all these wonderful jobs. In fact, that is not true at all. It took Statistics Canada to come out with the truth, and a few brave souls, one of them being Karen Howlett of the Globe and Mail, who on Wednesday, April 6 wrote: "But an analysis of Statistics Canada figures by the Globe and Mail reveals that the rate of investment in machinery and equipment has declined in lockstep with falling corporate tax rates over the past decade. At the same time, the analysis shows, businesses have added \$83 billion to their cash reserves since the onset of the recession in 2008."

This is what this government's policy is. This government's policy is giving \$83 billion to corporate Canada to fatten their wallets. No jobs are being created, or no meaningful jobs, as a result of what you're doing over there. That's why this is a horrendous budget.

It didn't take long for other people to weigh in on the Karen Howlett article. I think one of the ones who actually weighed in fastest and best was Jim Stanford, a very good economist. He writes a couple of things that I think need to be part of the record.

First: "Corporate tax cuts have very little positive impact on employment, since they induce very little change in business capital investment spending. Historical evidence in Canada since 2000 (when the corporate tax rate, then 29.1%, began to be dramatically reduced) indicates that business investment has deteriorated since then—whether measured as a share of GDP, as a share of existing capital stock, or as a share of corporate cash flow." That's the reality. This idea that you trickle down by giving the money to the very rich at the top and they're going to help everybody all the way to the bottom is some pretty bad Reaganomics, and this government ought to know better.

Jim Stanford goes on to state: "By the third quarter of 2010, the cash and short-term financial assets of non-financial businesses in Canada had reached \$480 billion—almost a half-trillion dollars.... Since the advent of the recession two years earlier, businesses socked away an additional \$83 billion in new cash." He goes on to say: "Further enhancing the cash flow of business, with no strings attached to incremental investment undertakings, will accomplish nothing other than enhancing that large stockpile of idle cash even further."

Surely this government must understand that when you're giving this money away to virtually no effect, you

are not helping the people of this province. You are not helping the poor. You're not helping cities. You're not helping children to learn. You're not helping universities. You're helping people sock away \$83 billion, to no effect except to make the rich richer. That's all that's happening with this budget and with your government.

Jim Stanford goes on to write: "When governments allocate large sums of revenue to corporate tax cuts, those resources are no longer available to fund other priorities—like extending EI benefits for laid-off workers, investing in infrastructure or housing, or supporting public programs through transfer payments (like health care or education). All of those programs create far more jobs than corporate tax cuts. Therefore, shifting money from EI benefits (or infrastructure or public services) into corporate tax cuts destroys net jobs."

He goes on and he makes quite a brilliant analysis, which I spoke about very briefly in response to the Minister of Infrastructure. He shows that for every \$1 billion of stimulus funds that this government could spend, the worst possible way for you to spend it in terms of job creation is for corporate income tax reductions, and yet that's the one you choose. Why do you choose this? Why do you choose not to create jobs? I don't understand. I don't understand any of you who choose the worst possible option and then stand up and are proud of it.

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As any economist will tell you, if you give that billion dollars to support unemployed low-income people—those who are suffering at the margins—you're going to create 18,755 net jobs within the province. If you spend a billion dollars for infrastructure investment, you're going to create 17,652 net new jobs. If you put the money into housing, you will create 16,548 jobs, and heaven knows, we desperately need housing, particularly for those with lower incomes, new Canadians and people starting out. We need housing in almost all of our municipalities across Ontario. If you take that billion dollars and even put it into personal income tax reductions, you're going to create 11,032 jobs. If you put it into EI premium reductions, you're still going to create 6,619 jobs. But if you put the billion dollars as you chose to do it, you're going to create 3,310. So the worst thing you could possibly do with that billion dollars is what you've chosen to do and what you stand up here, day after day, and brag about.

It is hard for anyone to fathom why you think giving money to super-rich companies so they can put it in their pocket, sock it away—some of them send it offshore—is a good investment. That is what is so morally wrong with this government and with this budget, and it's why I could not possibly consider supporting it, in spite of the fact that I'm happy for the farmers and happy for the fact that we have finally recognized that people with mental health issues deserve more support than we've given them in the past.

I also have to ask this government, how can you be proud of the runaway CEO salaries? We look at them every day. They've been the topic in question period in

this Legislature for four or five of the last 10 days. We look at how much money we're paying for people who work. We're looking at equal amounts of money being given to them when they don't work, when they haven't even worked the year before, and they're on the sunshine list with half a million dollars. How is it that this government can continue such a practice?

I do know that last year or the year before, there was a bill put forward by Andrea Horwath, my colleague the leader of the NDP, which would cap CEO salaries at twice the rate of pay of the Premier of Ontario, and I remember speaking at that time.

Whether you think the Premier is doing a good job or not, he has a tough job to do. He is responsible for his party, for his government, for the people of Ontario, for a \$120-billion budget, countless government departments and 723 agencies. He can be queried every single day on his actions by the press and by the people in this Legislature. It is one tough job, and we choose to pay him \$220,000 a year—I'm sure he earns every penny of it. I'm sure that most of the members here, if they're doing their job diligently—and I think most are honourable members and do—probably earn their pay as well.

But I have to question why this government thinks the corporate CEOs whom you protect so assiduously during question period, and at all times you try not to talk about their salaries or why they're getting payouts or why they're getting severance pay—why do you try to protect all of this, people who earn not twice but three or four or five or six times as much as the Premier of Ontario?

Only one of two things can be said: Either you think these people are worth six times as much as the Premier of Ontario or, on the other side, you think the Premier of Ontario is only worth one sixth of what some of these people are. It doesn't work any other way.

We believe that these salaries have become obscene. If you're looking at ways of cutting back government expense, it cannot be on the backs of the poor and those who so desperately need the money; it needs to be on the backs of some of those who earn those obscene salaries.

And I see the member from Davenport was about to clap but thought better of that. I guess he's afraid of what his colleagues in the government might have to say about that.

So if you want to know what the budget should have done, the budget should have started to rein that in.

We looked at what else was contained in here, and that is the privatizing of child care programs in schools. This was particularly worrisome. I didn't really realize that the budget contained this provision, and certainly the finance minister, standing in his place on budget day, didn't laud this as one of the goals or one of the great things this government was doing. It was simply hidden away in the budget process, as so many things are: hidden away, hoping no one is going to find it. But as you look today, it's quite clear what the government's intent is. The government intends to allow for for-profit corporations; it would allow the schools the option of contracting out the before- and after-school program to third-party providers instead of delivering it themselves.

Well, it's taken a few days, but people who have discovered that this is contained within the body of the budget bill wonder what Charles Pascal and his report and this government's commitment to it were all about, because this is not what they expected of this government. It's not what I think Mr. Pascal expected when he was talking about full-day learning and an opportunity for before- and after-school programs so that children would have the very best opportunity. He didn't think it would be sold out to the lowest bidder. Because that is, in fact, what is going to happen.

People like the Atkinson Foundation, which does a lot of good work here in Ontario, but particularly in the Toronto area, and the Ontario Public School Boards' Association have raised concerns that the for-profit care will be delivered by low-paid staff and will not be of good quality. I think we have every reason to be worried. If you're going to allow it to be done by the lowest bidder, then you can expect that the programs will not be done in the same meticulous and caring way that they are done by child care professionals.

Now, I've only got a little over a minute left, and I wanted to talk about something which I found—and I was really quite surprised. As you go through the schedules—and I remember two or three budgets ago, I went through the schedules and found out that within the body of the budget, the government decided to extend the term of municipally elected people, mayors and reeves and councillors, from three years to four years. They hid it in schedule H, I think it was, of that particular budget. There it was, hidden, unannounced, with people wondering, "What is this all about?"—a government hiding a program which had been very highly contentious through a number of public policy forums and commissions in this Legislature. But this one here, I found this time. This is the Gaming Control Act, 1992, and schedule 17 changes to it.

One of the changes—and I read this to you: "In addition to any provision of the Labour Relations Act ... no trade union within the meaning of that act shall represent persons employed in or with respect to a gaming site or in the operation of a lottery scheme unless the trade union and those of its officers, officials and agents prescribed by the regulations are registered as suppliers." It goes on then to describe suppliers. I don't know how any of the unions are going to exist anymore.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise to add to the debate, I hope, and to pass some comments on those that were just made by the member from Beaches—East York.

I think it's always healthy when you have a variety of opinions on the budget, and we've heard some of those expressed today. I think you need to take into account the economic times that we find ourselves in and have found ourselves in for some time. So if there was ever a time that called out for a balanced budget, for one that addressed the social needs and the educational needs of

our society, along with the economic needs, this would be, I think, a likely time.

My experience is not like that of the member from Beaches–East York. The response I've had in my community to this budget has been a very positive one. The response that I've noticed from most of the media—probably not all, but from most of the media—is that the budget has been received well. That is because, I think, people can honestly say in the province of Ontario that the economy is improving.

The jobs are starting to come back to the province of Ontario.

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When you compare ourselves to other jurisdictions around the world, if you look at the UK, for example, it's only recovered 40% of its jobs, and, unfortunately, our neighbour to the south, whom we rely on with trade, has only recovered 15% of the jobs that it lost during the recession. Ontario has recovered somewhere around the mid-90% of the jobs that it lost during the recession. I think that's a sign that Ontario's on the right track.

Are we out of the woods? No, we're not. Do we need to eliminate the deficit? Yes, we do, and we have a plan to do that. We're protecting the progress we've made in education: Full-day learning for our four- and five-year-olds is scheduled to go ahead as planned; we're adding 60,000 additional college and university spaces to our system by 2015-16; and, as has been noted, I'm glad to hear, by members of all parties, we've invested in children's mental health. One thing that can't be argued about in this budget is that that was a sound investment.

I understand that there will be a variety of opinions, but on balance, I think this is a good budget and is worthy of support.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. John O'Toole: I always listen to the member from Beaches–East York; he's quite honest, very sincere and quite genuine. I would say that he does stand up for people. When he speaks of his disappointment in the budget, I'm impressed. I applaud his honesty and remarks. I'll tell you why.

I see Pat Dillon walking in here today—he's a person I know, and he's in charge of Working Families, an excellent representative here, I suspect, of the McGuinty government—but my point being, what really is going on here is that—now, the member that just spoke, there, the other one where they look the gas plant out of his riding, Mr. Flynn—

Interjection: The seat-saver program.

Mr. John O'Toole: The seat-saver program. They're spending \$1.8 million—I'm speaking directly to the people of Ontario—\$1.8 million each and every hour of every day more than they're taking in as tax revenue. I'm going to repeat that: Every hour of every day, they're spending \$1.8 million more than they have in revenue.

What that means is, your child that's in university—the 60,000 new spots or whatever it is, they're going to be getting the bill for that when they graduate, because

they're borrowing the money. Don't let anyone tell you anything different; they're borrowing the money.

If you look deep down on the numbers on this, they are giving a 10% cut to your energy bill. Now, they're not really doing that for everyone. They said today in the House that they're doing it—they're not doing it for everyone. It's income-tested, so it goes to the lower—by the way, they are borrowing a billion dollars to do that, so they can give them the money back, because they went too deep on the cost of electricity. They went too deep, too fast.

I'm very concerned that Ontario is heading towards the largest abyss in the history of Ontario. It's tragic, and they've got an auditor coming in just before the election to tell us that they can't manage the deficit.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I think the member from East York must have been handed the NDP's speaking notes for the 1996 Harris budget, but not this year's financial plan.

For Mississauga, my home city, the 80 new people working for Pratt and Whitney vehemently would agree that Ontario's now manufacturing-friendly tax structure promotes growth and prosperity. The 53 new people working for Concept Plastics in Mississauga as recent hires, full-time, who manufacture auto accessories, would disagree with the member for Beaches–East York. Indeed, the federal NDP leader, Jack Layton, disagrees with the member for Beaches–East York in the federal NDP platform.

Our way in Ontario is forward to a future in which the industries of tomorrow come here to build companies, to build careers, to build investments in such fields as renewable energy, digital media, water management, financial services and those other knowledge-based sectors of prosperity for the 21st century. Perhaps the Ontario NDP wants us to help create nothing, to generate no electric power, to develop no new industries and to give away every advantage that Ontario now has.

We've turned the corner in Ontario, and we choose to go forward; not to sit down, throw up our hands and just give up. Our future—our Ontario future—encourages the proud, hard-working people of this province with the ideas of the future to do their thinking, their making, their marketing, their investment and their banking right here in Ontario.

Eleven out of 12 of the people who were out of work during the recession are now back working. Game, set and match. Let's pass this budget.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I just have a few simple comments in response to the member. Taxes have been seen, and have always been seen, by economists of every stripe as a tool for fiscal management. There are circumstances when taxes should or could be raised, and there are times when taxes should or could be decreased. To suggest that taxes should never be reduced is to suggest that the only thing that could ever happen to taxes is that they will be

increased and continue to be increased. I think that is simply not a sustainable principle of fiscal management.

I think if people are paying attention to the federal election, they will see that even Jack Layton from the NDP is now suggesting tax cuts for small business. So where they make the line is very confusing, in terms of the NDP.

Our combination of policies, including tax cuts, including infrastructure spending, has resulted in six successive quarters of economic growth—probably among the best recoveries from this recession, the worst recession since the Great Depression, internationally, of all those jurisdictions with advanced economies. We're very proud of that result, and that is going to continue under the budget that has been presented to this House.

We are satisfied, and I think the people of Ontario are satisfied, with the combination of income tax cuts for individuals, corporate income tax cuts and infrastructure funding, which has resulted in the greatest recovery of any jurisdiction, at least in North America, and competing for the same—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Beaches–East York has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Michael Prue: I thank the members from Oakville, Durham and Mississauga–Streetsville and the Minister of Infrastructure for their comments.

The Minister of Infrastructure talked about the federal NDP policy. Yes, the policy is fundamentally different from your flawed policy because you give it to people who do not create jobs. The NDP policy, federally, is to give it to small businesses tied in to the creation of those same jobs. It's one thing to give away \$83 billion and receive almost nothing for it, and it is another thing to use a tax policy to actually create jobs, as small businesses do throughout the course of this province and throughout the course of this country, and to actually have people working for it. The failure of this government is that you have used a blunt tool to create nothing except the lining of pockets of the very, very wealthy.

As Jim Stanford and the Globe and Mail and Statistics Canada and everyone else has said—and if you had listened to my speech—the worst possible thing to waste your money on is the thing that you are wasting it on in the creation of almost no employment. And as has been said, you can create six times as much employment if you give your support to unemployed and low-income people than if you give corporate tax cuts.

If you're really serious about creating jobs, do some of that—or you can create more with infrastructure investments or building housing. That's where you create jobs, not lining people's pockets, not paying huge CEO salaries. That's what Liberals are all about; that's what I reject.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

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Mr. Mario Sergio: Before I make my remarks, as much as I would like to have all the time for myself,

which is 20 minutes, I'd like to advise the Chair that I will be splitting my time with the member from Davenport.

In making my remarks, my remarks are based on the document that is up for debate, which is Bill 173. It is the financial document, the budget, presented by the Minister of Finance. It is the document that speaks practically of the record of the government for the last several years as we are moving into an election this coming October. Every member on this side of the House will be going into that election on October 6 based on that record and based on this document called the budget. As in the debate on any other document, we have different views, different versions of what the real documents may be all about. But we have only one document, and here it is. It speaks for itself. It is available to any Ontarian who wants to avail herself or himself of it and look at the facts.

I have no problem going to the polls this coming October 6 based on the record of the government in the last several years and based on this document which is up for debate. I think the people of Ontario are well aware, because this is what they wanted: to preserve not only what we have accomplished on their behalf over the past several years but those things that are dear and close to their heart. Health care, education, the economy, jobs: These are the important things for the people of Ontario and the people of York West.

Through the various indexes and pages of this document, for example, on pages 47 to 97 and the various indexes, we find some information about health care. Who can complain about this: more breast cancer screening, some 90,000 screening exams for women at high risk between the ages of 30 and 49 and 50 to 69?

A first: Building a comprehensive mental health care and addiction strategy, which comes from the consultations that were held with the other members of this House. The government has been listening and agrees that something has to be done, and here it is. It's in the budget. This is a first.

We are expanding pharmacy services, including servicing our seniors using the Ontario drug benefit program. My seniors love this one here.

A dental care coverage system for all those who qualify under the age of 17; this has never been before. Now everyone can have that particular service, and it is especially addressed to low-income families. In my own riding of York West, I'm grateful for that.

We have a new family health team serving some 100,000 people, and diabetes funding, for the Black Creek Community Health Centre, which is one of 51 teams created throughout the province of Ontario. I have one in my particular area.

Interjection.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Yes, because of the high numbers of diabetes.

In education, again throughout this document on pages 40, 44, 83 and 91, you can find all kinds of information with respect to education. Creating some 60,000 new

student spaces in our colleges and universities is so that, for anyone who wants to attend, there will be space for them.

Starting this September, some 200 additional schools will have full-day kindergarten, benefiting some 50,000 kids. Imagine the benefit that this will accumulate to the parents of children, especially single parents. My own riding of York West, again I'm pleased and very proud, will have six new schools providing full-day kindergarten come this fall: Stanley Public School, St. Wilfrid, St. Charles Garnier, Chalkfarm Public School, Driftwood Public School and Gosford Public School.

We have heard so much about the economy and jobs. Again, on page 155 of the document, there is an outlook on jobs. There is an outlook on the economy and recovery on page 157, and on economic growth as well, from page 171 to 180.

Because of the prudent management and solid direction and action that the government has taken over the last few years, we have turned around the corner faster than any other region, including the USA. Our five-year Open Ontario plan is working, and it's working well and it's working fast, attracting investment and new jobs. Ontario's tax plan will create some 600,000 new jobs within the coming 10 years.

Our economy is growing and growing. Infrastructure investments of some \$62 billion created and preserved more than 80,000 jobs per year. This is thanks to the vision of the Premier and this government. Again, thanks to this government's response and action to the auto sector crisis, we supported some 400,000 jobs. Can you imagine supporting 400,000 jobs in the most important industry in Ontario and perhaps even in Canada? And it helped. It helped save the Ontario auto industry.

Since May 2009, our economy has been boosted with some 230,000 new jobs; that's from 2009. We have recovered—this is huge for the province of Ontario, because only a couple of years ago, we were languishing within the problem—some 91% of all the jobs lost. But what's really good, what's really important, is that 84% of those jobs that were recovered are full-time jobs. In the States, they only recovered up to 14%.

For the 2011-12 summer, some 100,000 students will have a job, because the government has initiated a program with \$22.5 million so that students will have a job.

Government actions: I have to say that we speak about those things that are dear to us. We created 18 new hospitals. One million more Ontarians have a doctor. There are 170 family health teams to serve our Ontarians better. We hired 10,700 nurses. We have reduced by 25% the cost of generic drugs. Ontario has the shortest wait times in Canada. We have expanded medical school spaces by 23%. Hospital funding has increased by 50%.

We hear so much about hydro costs, which are expensive; I have to say they're expensive, yes. But you know what? I, like everybody else, receive hydro bills. And what do we see in that hydro bill? A little line saying "Debt reduction: \$21.86"—something like that. You know what that is? It is the accumulation of some

40-plus years of Conservative governments which accumulated some \$43 billion, because Ontarians didn't pay the right amount and the government didn't do anything about it. Now, every Ontarian, every time we get a hydro bill, we have to pay that particular debt.

My time, unfortunately, is up. Otherwise, my colleague from Davenport is going to come with a piece of paper and say, "Time."

I have to say, I like this document. Anyone who wants it, it's available; I hope that we'll pass it soon and get back to work.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Member from Davenport.

1510

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I certainly liked what the member from York West said.

While we're having a large audience—I know that there must be a million people watching this debate—I want to especially greet and welcome those students from Oakwood Collegiate who have indicated that they're watching the budget debate today. Welcome to all of you students. To the students, I simply say to remember this: The members of the opposition parties are being paid to criticize us. That's the way the parliamentary system actually functions.

It's kind of interesting to see how they would be criticizing this budget. I want to remind you that in these notes that every party receives, essentially before the speakers get a chance to say anything, the parties and their research departments are providing what we call speaking notes.

Our speaking notes, of course, indicate what's happening in terms of this budget. You hear speaker after speaker from our party saying that this is the greatest budget that has ever been produced and you've got the opposition parties saying that this is terrible; it's a miserable failure. I heard one member say that it's irresponsible; it's even reprehensible; it's 100% wrong. You have to make up your mind—and it's an educated mind; you're in school. You have an educated mind, but you have to do some research here to see which of the parties would be able to produce the best budget for the future of Ontario. Which of these parties can you trust? Because in the end, it's a question of who you trust to produce good government in Ontario. Of course, on October 6 you have a chance to cast your ballot.

The way that we can understand how trust is being developed is by looking at the past. Everybody, all three parties, had a chance at the till of the province. Everyone had a chance to be the pilot or the captain of the ship of government. I've got so many notes here to tell you what they've done in the past. I'll just give you some examples. The NDP opposed our tax plan to create 600,000 jobs. When they were in power, 74,000 net jobs were lost—while the NDP were in power. That's an average of 1,300 people a month, and the unemployment rate averaged 10% under their government. I can go on and on. There are many pages here where we can be critical of what they produced.

For instance, the NDP, when they were in power, more than doubled the provincial debt in just five years, and they posted four straight deficits. We produced and posted three balanced budgets. The NDP opposed the McGuinty government's legislation to ban two-tier health care, voted against funding to hire more staff in long-term-care homes, and cut medical school spaces. Under the NDP, the number of nurses in Ontario fell by 3,000, and on and on. It's amazing, when you look at this, how this government could ever function for five years.

They cut student aid by almost 50%. That was the NDP. And when they were in government, they increased university and college tuition fees by almost 50%. As I say, I've got pages and pages and pages.

Let's look at the trust that we can adhere to the government in power when the PCs were in power. We have some very educated persons here, our colleagues right now, who are obviously going to react when I criticize them. What happens here is: Did that party support the municipal infrastructure partnership? Their leader said, "No. It's too much; it's too rich." The Conference Board of Canada estimated that the partnership saved 70,000 jobs. And they were against it. Under the PC government, there was no new auto investment policy in Ontario. They failed to attract a single new auto plant for the province, despite—listen to this—90 new plants being built in the US during the same time—90 new plants being built, and how many did you produce in Ontario? Do you know how many? Was it five? No. Was it four? No. It was this much.

When we came into office, of course, we produced a number of these new plants, which really means a number of new jobs. But this is only page 1. So I tell the students: What you've got to figure out, what you've got to do your research on, is what their government has done in the past. That's the best way to establish who you can trust with the till of this province; who you can trust to steer this government car in the right direction.

Listen to this one: What did the PCs do? They hid a \$5.5-billion deficit from Ontarians in their 2003 budget. That was called the Magna budget at that time. Imagine that: hiding \$5.3 billion. Some people would call that—that simply wasn't right.

Anyway, let's look. There are so many pages here that it's incredible. But it is obvious what's happening here. I can go on and be critical of what they did in the past, and the students have to make up their own minds. I have given them some of these notes that they can make up their own minds with.

What's happening in the global economy today? The Minister of Research and Innovation has already indicated what we're trying to accomplish here with the government's support. The new jobs that are being created—and the students especially are interested in this—are in financing, innovation, science and engineering, especially biotechnology. It's amazing what the new biotechnology will do. They're creating nanorobots. They're doing gene therapy. They're creating patent after patent. Imagine right now, they're thinking about having you take a pill, and while the pill goes through your blood-

stream, that pill takes photographs throughout the whole system. Isn't that wonderful when you think about it? This nanotechnology business and the idea of this new technology is really fascinating.

Interjections.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: But that's where the new jobs are and that's one of the things you have not understood. You have not understood the new technology and where these new jobs are coming from.

Anybody who has been in China, anybody who knows anything about the Chinese culture, anybody who knows anything about the rockets that, just three years ago, the Chinese sent into space—you know what? When those rockets were first launched, we used to laugh. "Ha, ha, ha," we said, "look at that. Look what happens to the engines over there. Look what happens to the electrical system in the rockets. Look at the propulsion system, how primitive it is. Look at the track wheels, the re-entry wheels." We laughed a lot. And who's laughing now at the Chinese? Who's laughing now? Nobody's laughing now. Within three years, they've done almost the impossible.

What I tell the students is, you've got to stay in school. When they come here, sometimes I ask the students, "Would you like to go to school on Saturday mornings? Would you like to do that? How are you going to compete globally now? How are you going to maintain the jobs? How are you going to do that? You've got to stay in school."

Mr. John Yakabuski: You lowered the standards in schools.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Mr. Yakabuski, you've got to tell your students that they've got to stay in school because only then are they able to compete. The new technology is a school technology. That's what's in this budget here, and that's why this budget is great. It says that 60,000 student are going to come into the university system up to 2014-15. Isn't that great? So, students, listen. We're opening up the system; we want you to stay in school.

But I asked them, "How many of you are going to stay who'd like to go to school on Saturday mornings?" I ask each class that now because I know what they do in China. In China, their students go to school—not Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, but Fridays and Saturday mornings. How are Canadian students going to compete with that kind of approach to schooling, with that kind of motivation to stay in school? Then, nobody is going to laugh any more. It is clear.

Let's take the example of India. India is graduating over 250,000 engineers a year. That's how many engineers we have in all of Canada. Imagine that. Every year, 250,000 new engineers are being graduated in India. It's almost impossible to think about those numbers.

Madam Speaker, thank you very much. I'm hoping—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened carefully this afternoon, and I don't hear any apologies. What I'm hearing is a lot more spending and no respect for taxpayers.

When I listened to the member from York West, a very gentlemanly person, and the member from Davenport, who I know has been to China more times than is necessary—but here's the real issue: They haven't really dealt with their problem. The Premier should say, "My name is Dalton McGuinty and I have a spending problem." He really should go to the five-step program; I'm not kidding. If you look at it right now, we're spending \$1.8 million each and every hour more than we're taking in as revenue. Let's repeat this: \$1.8 million an hour. That's so many dollars per second of red ink which eventually has to be paid back to the lenders.

1520

We know now the debt, which has grown from \$136 billion—and I'm looking up the number here, on page 297. The accumulated debt, all rolled in, is \$257 billion. The interest on that per year is just over \$10 billion. If you boil this down, that's the fourth-largest single item. We know now that interest is quite low. That's how they're stimulating the economy with monetary policy. Here's the real deal: If interest goes up, it's going to cost you. Say interest doubled from 1% to 2%; it would be \$20 billion.

The future is in perilous condition. They haven't even realized yet that they have a problem. They've got Don Drummond coming in. He's going to figure it out. Right after the election, they'll tell you, "Oh, we got this problem!"

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I listened in particular to the member from Davenport. It strikes me that he, like the government, is trying to confuse two things. We all know that there's a variety of new technologies in the world—everyone knows that—but the McGuinty Liberal government somehow wants people to believe that new technology in the world only comes through the Liberal government.

I have to tell members, particularly the member from Davenport, that new technologies were being discovered and implemented long before any of you ever arrived here, and they'll be discovered and implemented long after you're gone. That there's any association between this government and the discovery and the advancement and the implementation of new technology is a complete fairy tale, and I think everyone across the province realizes that.

The real issue out there for people is this: People, by and large, across this province have lower incomes than they had three or four years ago. Students see tuition fees going through the roof. They see living costs going through the roof. They see housing costs going through the roof. They see a government that continues to add to those costs, whether by driving the electricity rates through the roof or with the single largest tax increase ever experienced, the HST. People want to know, since their incomes are less now than what they were three or four years ago, how are they supposed to pay more in fees, more in bills and more in taxes than ever before?

That's the question that I think this budget failed to answer and that the McGuinty Liberal government fails to answer.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I did listen very carefully to comments from my colleagues from York West and Davenport.

Of course, I take some satisfaction: The federal leader of the NDP, Mr. Layton, was quoted last week as supporting the HST in Nova Scotia, where he deemed it a progressive tax policy. One story in Nova Scotia, one in British Columbia—but we'll let people decide that.

You've got to go to a third party to get where we are. From the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters Association, "Manufacturers and exporters have been impacted significantly. But there are signs of greater optimism for the sector going forward. In fact, CME's forecast for the coming year is that manufacturing investment and exports will outpace GDP growth in 2011. In fact, Canada will rely on exports and business investment to sustain economic recovery. Export volumes are expected to expand 10% and machinery and equipment investments will increase by 16.5%. Ontario is once again leading the economic charge based primarily on the resiliency of our industrial and manufacturing base. Companies are adapting to rapidly changing circumstances. They are taking the necessary steps to survive and thrive in the new global reality."

Credit for the recovery is also owing to the Ontario government for taking bold steps to address the challenges that are impacting manufacturers and exporters. In particular, CME "strongly supported the HST, corporate tax rate reductions ... and the Smart program" and significant infrastructure investments and measures to encourage skills training and equipment.

That is from the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters association. Indeed, I have another document here that I'll just briefly make reference to.

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Leal: No.

Ken Lewenza, the national president of the Canadian Auto Workers, has lots of members in Peterborough. He had this to say at pre-budget submissions: "We recognize the difficult and competing pressures which the current Ontario government is attempting to balance. And while we do not endorse every decision this government has made, it is only fair to commend the positive initiatives that have been taken in many areas"—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm pleased to comment on the address from the members for Davenport and—is it York Centre?

Mr. Mario Sergio: York West.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —York West, speaking earlier. I just actually came into the chamber as the member for York West was finishing up, so I can't comment much on his address, but the member for Davenport seems to want to tell us what he knows about China and India as

opposed to what's actually happening in Ontario and how families are struggling in Ontario to make ends meet under this oppressive regime called the McGuinty Liberal government that wants to keep taking and taking and giving very little back.

When you talk to people on Main Street, Ontario, they are appalled at the way that this government is treating families in the province. I'll have a chance to speak to this a little later. I appreciate the indulgence of the Legislature agreeing to give me an hour, I believe, to speak on this shortly, as opposed to the usual 20 minutes. I really appreciate the government being willing to do that. I'm looking forward to having more to say shortly as they give me an hour to speak on this budget. I hope they don't change their minds, because I'm looking forward to that shortly in my opportunity.

This budget should have been about families. It was not. The McGuinty government failed. I'll tell you more about that soon.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from York West has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Mario Sergio: To the members from Durham, Kenora–Rainy River, Peterborough and Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, I'd like to thank them for their contributions to the budget document debate.

Let me say that the people of Ontario want help now. They want to have a job now. Single mothers want help now. Families want to know that they can send their kids to school and that there is space for them. They want to make sure that health care is there when they need it. These are the things that we have to look after.

I remember that when we were elected in 2003, after some of the best years in Ontario economically, we inherited a \$5-billion deficit. We paid that. We didn't cry "oul. We went on. We started to govern. We paid the debt, and here we are.

Can you imagine if we didn't protect the auto sector and let 400,000 employees, and then other thousands following that, go unprotected? I could hear the cry coming from the other side. But we did something good, something that the government had to do to protect those jobs, and we did. And do you know what? We are enjoying the fruits of that decision today because, stronger than ever, the auto sector is emerging and the workers are working, they are spending, they are paying their taxes, and we can produce other programs supporting families in need, and this is what the government should be doing.

I hope that in the end, the opposition will see the light and support the bill.

1530

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: The member for York West hopes we see the light. Well, I tell you, there have been switches going off high, wide and handsome on that side over the last few months as Queen's Park offices go dark because members are deciding they don't want to run for re-election. They don't want to run for re-election in Ontario because they don't agree with their own Premier. I give some of those members credit—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I give some of those members credit for saying, "Enough is enough, Premier. We're calling it quits."

But let me talk about Ontario families—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Stop the clock, please. I cannot hear the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I would ask members, please, to keep the noise level down so you can hear what he has to say, and so you can respond. Thank you.

The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I can appreciate that you can't hear me, Madam Speaker. I can't even hear myself think under the din that is coming across from those members on the opposite side. I sat here patiently listening to the members opposite give their addresses. I could only hope that I would be accorded the same.

Now, I may be mistaken, but I thought I was given unanimous consent to speak for 60 minutes and I see it's down to under 19 minutes. There is no 60 minutes? My goodness gracious, I lost out on that one.

Anyway, I talk to people on Main Street Ontario, and do you know what they ask me when I talk to people in my riding? As a matter of fact, I'm going to tell you a little bit about a meeting I had with a senior couple on the weekend, but I'll talk in general first. They ask me, "Did Premier McGuinty"—I know I can't say Dalton McGuinty—"not think about us at all as they were drawing up this budget? Did Premier McGuinty not listen to what we've been telling him and his members sitting across there for the past several months, that we were being crushed under the burden of the load he has placed upon us?" That's what they're saying: "We are being crushed under the burden of the load placed upon us by this Premier"—this Premier. That's what they're telling me.

I don't think I live in a unique—yes, I do; I do live in a unique part of this province and represent the finest people in this province, but I don't think they're that different from so many other people in other ridings across this province. I can tell you that those members on that side of the House, those backbenchers who don't sit in the cabinet room, have to be hearing exactly the same thing when they're in their ridings on weekends. They've got to be hearing the same thing.

I'll tell you about this couple I met with for about two hours on Saturday. They were speaking for themselves, but more importantly for so many other people who are in an even more difficult position than themselves. I'm not going to use the people's names, because I didn't clear that with them.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Because it may not be true.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, trust me—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The Minister of Social Services will retract that statement, please.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I retract.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I can assure my friend opposite, the Minister of Community and Social Services, that it is all very, very true—regrettable, but true.

They showed me their hydro bills, and they used some phrases I'm going to use. They talked about feeling like they were now in a police state. I said, "Explain that to me." They said, "Because we feel"—and I said, "You do have a choice." There is a choice, if you want to pay and pay. You're paying so much for hydro already. If you want to pay more and use it during peak times, so be it. You have that choice. They can't afford the bills now. Their house is electrically heated.

Last month, the hydro bill was over \$700. On that \$700 bill, the HST is \$91; the total tax is \$91. They are asking themselves, "How are we supposed to cope?"

But getting back to how they feel they're in a police state, they say, "We're being told we've got to do our laundry"—she's 80; he's just about 80. They're going to have to stay up at night to do their laundry or have to do their laundry on Saturdays, when maybe they should have the grandchildren over? They have to do their laundry in those time periods because Dalton McGuinty has prescribed that, that in his Ontario, those are the choices you have? "Follow my plan or pay through the teeth." That's how they feel.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I say to the Minister of Infrastructure over there—he's harping, saying, "Have them conserve energy." Well, if you're 80 years old and you're living at home and it's cold—and you know up in Renfrew county it's cold during the wintertime—is he suggesting they turn off the heat and freeze? What is he suggesting? It's easy to stand there or sit there and condemn them for not saving energy, but put yourself in their shoes and ask yourself what you would do. That's what I say to the members opposite.

The HST added to the cost of that hydro, the cost of home heating and the cost of gasoline—and I come from a rural area of the province. No one goes anywhere, unless it's just to your neighbour's house—and in some cases that might require driving, because depending upon where you live, your neighbour might be two miles down the road. But even if you're not in that situation, if you have to go anywhere, you have to get into a vehicle and drive. The price of gas, regardless of what it is today, is 8% more because of Premier McGuinty.

That's a burden that he decided to put on people's backs. He could have chosen not to; he could have chosen to harmonize the tax without adding 8% to hydro, 8% to gasoline and 8% to home heating. He could have done that, but he chose not to because he is hopelessly addicted to that revenue that he wants. In spite of all of that, he has a \$16.7-billion deficit. In spite of all that, he has a \$16.7-billion deficit and is on schedule to double this province's debt by 2011-12. You call that management?

Here's the interesting thing about the gas thing—I got this off the Canadian Press today. If it wasn't so painful, it would be laughable. This is what the finance minister

says: He "Warns Cutting Taxes on Gasoline Would Just Let Oil Companies Raise Prices." That's his logic for keeping taxes high on gasoline, because "If I wasn't taking your money, then the oil companies would be."

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I see the minister—I think she chuckled; I'm not sure. Maybe I could be wrong.

But can you imagine this? This is the logic of our finance minister? "I am going to keep those taxes high on gasoline because it's better that I take your money than letting those oil companies get it." He's basically accusing business—call it oil companies; we know the oil companies have lots of money. But he's basically saying, "If I don't take the money from you, they will."

But then in another part he says that he doesn't think regulating gasoline prices would make sense either. I don't agree with the regulation of gasoline prices either, but I'm not, on the other hand, going to make the preposterous statement that I have to keep the taxes up because otherwise oil companies will raise the price anyway. It's just unbelievable. Oh, and then he says—and you see too, this HST that they applied to the gasoline, when the price of oil goes up, as it has been rising over the last few months, and the price of gasoline goes up, the amount of revenue from that HST continues to go up, because it's not a fixed rate. We have 14.7 cents per litre, which they already have on gasoline—

1540

Interjection: A fixed amount.

Mr. John Yakabuski: A fixed excise tax in the province of Ontario, okay? So that doesn't change. If the price of oil is \$80 a barrel or the price of oil is \$120 a barrel, whatever the pump price is, that's 14.7 cents per litre.

But when the price goes up—the HST is a sales tax. Thanks to the Premier, that Premier, that cost goes up as well, because it's floating. So if the price goes up, the amount of tax that he's collecting off that gasoline goes up as well. So why would he want to lower that tax? Because he loves the money, do you know that?

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The member from Peterborough says something about the federal government. Well, I'll remind him that the federal government at least gives rural communities back a portion of that gas tax, which this government has refused time and time and time again. They refuse to give rural municipalities that do not have a public transportation system a portion of that gasoline tax.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The minister says she's talking about transportation investments; she can coat it any way she wants, but they don't get a portion of the gas tax, which the federal government does give them.

Now, back to the couple I was talking about. In the budget speech you'll recall—and let's call a spade a spade: It was the most partisan budget speech ever delivered in the history of this province—ever delivered in the history of this province.

In this speech, the finance minister said—and I won't spend a lot of time looking exactly where, but it is here—that 86% of seniors have more money in their pockets or are better off—I'll paraphrase it—under the HST. I haven't run into one yet that is jumping up and down saying, "I'm really happy about the McGuinty Liberals and their HST." I haven't run into one yet. How do they get away with either inventing this or paying someone to say it, and then table it in this Legislature as some sort of a third party endorsement? It amounts to the same thing. It's a third party endorsement.

Which brings me to another item, and now that they robbed some of my time, I don't know if I'm going to be able to get to this, but talking about third parties, of course I'm talking about the Working Families Coalition—cute name; doesn't say much about what it really is. I'm looking forward to the reaction in my riding to the letter that went out from the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association informing their membership that \$60 would be taken out of their dues to be spent to try to re-elect the McGuinty Liberals—

Mr. John O'Toole: That's a tax.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Not only is that a tax, but quite frankly, if the rules were properly enforced, it amounts to collusion, because they are not campaigning for an ideal; they are specifically working to try to defeat one party in favour of re-electing another.

If the party opposite was guided properly, ethically, they would say, "No." They would say, "You know what you can do? You can make a donation, by choice, as a member of this union or any other, or any non-union person or other, you can make a donation by choice to the political party of your choice, and it will then be spent by that political party." But then it becomes a part of election spending. You see, what's being spent here is outside the box, so to speak. It will not be part of the election spending limits placed on all political parties during a provincial election. This is wrong.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'm not surprised the teachers don't like you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The member for Oakville thinks it's funny. He says, "The teachers don't like you." Well, I can tell you that I have a brother who is a teacher and my daughter got accepted to teachers' college, and many, if not most, of the teachers in my riding supported me in the last election and probably will again. Do you know why? Because they don't believe in this.

They don't believe in their union telling them what to do with their money. And do you know what? The people—the parents who have children in school systems—don't believe in it either. They don't believe in it either, ma'am—Madam Speaker; I apologize for that—and I believe it is going to have a huge backlash, because this amounts to collusion—absolutely. And I'm looking forward to the opportunity to talk about this in my riding during the campaign. I am relishing the opportunity.

That's the kind of stuff that is going on. And if you think this stuff doesn't have its birth, its genesis, in the offices of Warren Kinsella and people like that, think

again. There are no limits to how low Mr. Kinsella will stoop when it comes to political engineering and political gamesmanship, and morals or ethics are not part of the equation. That's where this kind of stuff comes from. So I'm looking forward to that.

And ma'am—Madam Speaker; I apologize for calling you ma'am—in a truly fair system, this would not be allowed. In fact, in most other jurisdictions in this country, it is not allowed. They have strict limitations on third party spending in an election. But in Ontario—in this Ontario, where the Liberal Party is the beneficiary of that spending—they have no qualms about it. They don't see anything wrong with that. They don't see the moral wrongness of this being allowed to go on. They have no qualms. It is easy for them, because as long as it benefits them, they're going to be okay with it. It is wrong.

The government should have stood up and said no. We gave them an opportunity to ban third party advertising like this last year during the electoral system reforms. Do you think that if they were the targets of that advertising they would not have gone ahead with that ban? Of course they would have. They're self-preservationists; we understand that. But they saw this as a big win for them. They're the beneficiaries, so they want to keep this truck rolling.

It is deceitful. It is wrong for the people of Ontario. It is wrong to allow this to go on.

Mr. Bob Delaney: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Aside from unparliamentary language, the member is in violation of at least three provisions of standing order 23 with the word he just uttered.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): My understanding is that he was referring not to government members but to parties outside this chamber, but I certainly advise the member to watch his language. Thank you very much.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and you're precisely correct. That's why you're the Speaker and he sits in the back row. You understand the standing orders and you're listening to the speech, not just looking for an opportunity to stick your nose in. Anyway—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I would advise the member: He's walking a fine line.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I just want to finish up, because now I'm running short of time.

This government had a great opportunity in this budget to stand up for families in this province. It chose not to. There is not a thing in this budget to help families. There's not a thing in this budget to help seniors who are struggling to stay in their own homes under the costs being inflicted upon them by this government. They had an opportunity; they chose not to do so. Shame on them.

This is a bad budget for families in the province of Ontario, but it's the kind of budget that Liberals are fawning over. But who would be surprised? Families lose; the Liberals win.

1550

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I listened carefully to my Conservative colleague, as I often do, because while I disagree with him on many issues, he does speak forcefully and he does speak intelligently about a number of things that were left out of this budget.

I think he is quite correct when he says that for the average person in Ontario who struggles to pay the bills, who worries about how they're going to afford to send their kids to university or college when the tuition fees keep skyrocketing through the roof, who increasingly worries about whether they're going to have job security or whether they're going to have a pension, who increasingly worries about whether they'll be able to pay the hydro bill at the end of the month—if those people were looking for something in this budget, I think for the majority of them, the answer is, "There's nothing here."

This is a budget that overwhelmingly focuses upon what I would call the corporate welfare bums of Ontario. If you're a Bay Street bank, if you're a Bay Street insurance company, the McGuinty Liberals are prepared to shower you with largesse—billions of dollars of tax cuts. But if you're the ordinary person trying to pay the bills, trying to do the right thing for your family, trying to do the right thing for your community, this is a budget that is bereft of anything that is positive and makes a contribution to people.

I marvel at government backbenchers who stand in their place and try to defend this every day. For God's sake, take a walk down the main street of communities in your riding and talk to people, and they will set you straight.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to make comments on the remarks by the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

He believes in magic. He believes that we can have the benefits of the 21st century at the price of the mid-20th century. That's magic. He believes that the electricity system and transmission system in Ontario will reinvent itself. That's magic. He believes that you can build and repair and maintain and construct roads for free. That's magic. He believes that you can have tomorrow's industries today with yesterday's expensive, inefficient, wasteful and dysfunctional tax system. That's magic.

If you believe in magic, the tooth fairy and the Easter Bunny, then the member's thoughts will probably resonate with you. But Ontarians live in a real world. It's the 21st century. We need a tax system that brings with it the prosperity of tomorrow in Ontario, and we have that. It's not magic; it's just good fiscal policy.

Ontarians need to know that when they turn on the switch or plug in an appliance, the electricity will be there. That didn't happen on the last, sad, sorry watch in government of the party of the member opposite, the Progressive Conservatives. Clean, affordable, sustainable electricity in Ontario is not magic. It's just sound planning and good policy.

Our kids are graduating in greater numbers. Our province has turned a corner and our people are getting

back to work. This is the budget that Ontario needs, to help families, to help students, to help seniors, to help entrepreneurs, to help job creators, and especially to help the vulnerable. Ontario needs this budget. Let's pass it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, I believe, very passionately and succinctly made a very strong argument for what's wrong with this budget. He did mention how much is being spent per hour on the deficit. I think \$1.8 million more than they're taking in, every single hour, is being spent.

What he was really saying was, he's arguing for the families in Renfrew, or in Ontario, for that matter, that they want some respect. They want some relief.

All they've felt is the cost of energy, the cost of tuition, the cost of gas, the cost of auto insurance, the cost in your hospitals. The cost of our way of living has become onerous and unacceptable.

Ultimately, it's fine for Ron Sapsford and others getting three quarters of a million dollars a year in a year they didn't work, but how about the average family? How about the family that's waiting for long-term care, or waiting for home care, or waiting for affordable medications, or simply waiting for care? There's absolutely no respect for families in this province. It's exceeding all of the norms. In fact, Ontario, once a leader, is now being deemed to be in last place across the country.

I'm not sure how they can stand up and defend the actions of Premier McGuinty. He is a Premier who's lost his way. I think he's a very nice gentleman. I think in the first term or so he was really focused; now, he's lost his focus. He doesn't seem to care too much any more.

What I hear from my constituents is that we need a change. That time is coming, and this budget is the very first step down the hill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. He spoke in very nice language about average people and how they see a budget and how they see the impact upon them.

But I must state that I'm very disappointed by the member from Mississauga–Streetsville's characterization in his two-minute hit. He talked about magic. I remember, if you go back in history just a little, there was a guy by the name of Harry Houdini who dabbled in magic. He soon discovered that magic didn't work, but illusion was the thing that worked much better.

It is here where the Liberals have truly, truly made great strides. They believe in the illusion that the government actually does something when it does nothing. They pull all the magic rabbits out of the hat and say, "Look how good we are," but they're not because it's all an illusion.

They talk about the illusion of prosperity when there is no prosperity, when people are unemployed—places like Hamilton at 10% or Windsor at 10%. They talk about the illusion of actually building houses when they haven't

built any houses in their whole eight years, and they promised 20,000 units a year. They have the illusion that this debt of \$17 billion is magically going to go away. What an illusion that is. They have the illusion that P3s are going to work, that if you take money from the private sector, you can actually build it cheaper than if you build it yourself, which is absolutely and totally not right. What an illusion that is. Today, we learn that they have the illusion that for-profit child care in the schools is actually going to be good for you.

If anyone needs to learn about magic and about illusion, it is the member from Streetsville and the caucus around him.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I appreciate the input from the members from Kenora–Rainy River, Mississauga–Streetsville, Durham and Beaches–East York. I'll just quickly touch on that magic scenario from the member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

If I did believe in magic, I'd be more certain of being able to ensure that some people disappeared in October. But right about now, I'm only being fairly hopeful on it, and we're going to do our best to make sure that most of them are the ones on the other side of the House.

But he did talk about energy a little bit, and my friend from Beaches–East York talks about illusion. The illusion of doing something positive is when you see a billion dollars being costed to the ratepayers in energy for selling hydro at or below cost, or even paying people to take it away since 2006 under this government because of the energy decisions they've made—a billion dollars—throwing it away because they have no market for it, because they have all kinds of contracts that they buy hydro from even if we don't need it. That's how it works. We buy hydro even if we don't need it. That's guaranteed contracts. Sounds like a social program to me.

I want to finish by reminding people of one thing that I never got a chance to get to. Just remember, I say to the people listening today: a \$16.7-billion deficit, addiction to taxes—it's a recipe for ensuring that taxes will go up again.

They promised that taxes would not go up after the 2003 election; they came in with the biggest tax increase in Ontario's history. They promised no taxes after 2007; they brought in the HST. Mark my words: People in Ontario know that if this government is re-elected they will raise your taxes again. It's in their DNA. They can't help it. It's like the scorpion and the frog. They will raise your taxes.

1600

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate.

Mr. Howard Hampton: After that, I'm going to be hard-pressed to match either the volume or the passion and intensity, but I will try.

I want to start by relating what happened in my constituency office just about a week ago. I had a couple

come in. They are, shall we say, involuntarily retired. He had worked for a long time in a sawmill. He was laid off. She is working at a local department store for basically minimum wage. He is also working in a similar kind of job: minimum wage plus 10 cents, no benefits, no pension, no benefit package. If you look at their income today and compare it with their income of, say, three or four years ago, their income is substantially less.

I suppose members of the government would want to say that somebody in this situation represents a minority of Ontarians, but I would say that if I were to go to Windsor, Sarnia, Chatham, St. Thomas, London, Brantford, Hamilton, Niagara, Oshawa or anywhere across the north, and I would venture to say that if I were to go to many parts of Toronto, what I'd find is many, many more people who are in a similar or identical situation: Their income is significantly less now than it was three or four years ago. That's what these folks presented to me. They said, "We've worked hard all our lives. We've paid our taxes. We've been good citizens of the community. We've done everything that you're supposed to do. Here we are, and our income is significantly less than what it used to be." That was part of what they wanted to get across.

The other part that they wanted to get across is that they brought in their hydro bill, their heating bill and their municipal tax bill, and they pointed out that all of these things have gone up. In fact, they brought in their hydro bill from 2004. They're people who keep all their bills—2004, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011. It's not exaggeration at all to say that these people, whose income has declined, are now paying \$3,000 a year more for electricity than they paid just a few years ago; that their heating bill, because they have to heat their home with oil heat, is significantly more than what it was four or five years ago. If you add the HST on the bills, the hydro bill and the heating bill, it is even more painful. If you look at the municipal property tax, it is higher than it used to be.

I suspect that these people would look at this budget and say, "What is there here that's going to make a difference in my life?" I think if the government were honest, the government would have to say, "There's nothing in this budget that's going to make a positive difference in your life." That is the problem: At a time when more and more Ontarians are struggling to pay the bills, are struggling to make it to the end of the month, are struggling, trying to figure out, "How do we put some money away to ensure that our kids can go to college or university?" the fact of the matter is that this government is not doing anything much to help them. In fact, this government is doing lots to hurt them.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We're just putting the grants in place.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The minister has lots to say; I invite her to stand up and speak later. But I hope somebody from the government would try to respond to these issues.

One of the things they pointed out to me, and this is what they wanted help with: They were so disturbed

about the increase in their hydro bill that they actually signed on with one of these door-to-door electricity marketers and then discovered that their hydro bill is going to go up by yet another 100%. That's what they were looking for help with: Could I help them somehow with this contract that was going to see them pay not \$400 a month for their electricity but \$800 a month for their electricity? Their point was that the fellow who came to the door said, "We're going to save you money on the hydro bill." In fact, they used the term, "We're going to give you peace of mind." That's a funny turn of phrase, to have your hydro bill go from \$400 a month to \$800 a month and call it peace of mind.

I spent some time searching in this budget to deal with that issue, because people like this who are facing a tough time are even further being ripped off by this door-to-door hydro sales pitch.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There are new rules.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Government members say, "Oh, there are new rules." Do the new rules stop these outfits from sending people a \$50 check and then, if the people happen to endorse the check, they find out later that they're committed to a hydro contract? Do these new rules that Liberals boast about prohibit that? No, they don't. Any reasonable person would describe that as flim-flam; they'd describe it as sleazy. Do the new rules prohibit that? No.

These same rip-off companies will send somebody a prepaid credit card, saying, "Here, take this credit card." And you know what? If you use the credit card, you discover that you're now committed to an electricity contract that will double your hydro bill. Do these new rules that Liberals boast about prohibit that kind of sleazy practice, that kind of disgusting conduct? Not at all. Not at all.

Do you know what else they do? They will send you a letter—and I've had this happen to constituents. These companies send you a letter, and in the letter they say, "You have a contract for electricity with us." They actually quote your contract number and everything, and then they say, "If you renew with us, we're going to reduce your rate." And unsuspecting people, because their account number is there, think, "Holy smokes, I don't remember this but I guess maybe somehow I'm committed," and they get sucked in and they sign. Imagine that. Imagine rules and legislation that allow a company to misrepresent in that way. Is there anything in this budget that would prohibit that kind of sleazy conduct? No, and it's not in the previous legislation either. That kind of sleazy conduct continues under this government, under this budget.

I see people who struggle to pay the bills, who struggle to pay the heating bill and the hydro bill, wonder how they are going to do it. I see them being ripped off, dealing with sleazy, underhanded approaches and sleazy, underhanded dealing. Those people would look at this budget and say, "Is there something here to help me?" No, there isn't. There's the same sprinkling of Liberal promises, the same promises we have heard over and over again.

Every budget, I think, since 2003 I've heard the Liberal government say that they've got a plan to tackle poverty. The reality out there is that poverty is worse than ever. More people are falling between the cracks and more people are falling deeper between the cracks than ever before. All this government is proposing to do is more study: eight years later, more study, when the situation becomes worse and worse.

1610

I look at what is the single biggest piece of this government's budget direction. I say to myself: What's the budget direction? Well, the first part of the budget direction is to increase taxes on ordinary folks, and that's what the HST is. The HST is an overwhelming tax grab at the expense of modest- and middle-income people. I don't have well-to-do people coming to my constituency office complaining about the HST—for good reason. For somebody who has an income of \$150,000, \$200,000 or \$300,000 a year, the HST may mean that they pay more, but it's a minor annoyance. But for someone who has an income of \$40,000 a year, \$60,000 a year or \$70,000 a year, it is a major problem.

That's where I would say that this government is really showing its true colours. Who has it gone after in terms of raising taxes? It has gone after modest- and middle-income families—because the HST goes after them with a vengeance. It has a very minor effect on people with high incomes; it's practically not an issue for people with high incomes. But for modest- and middle-income families, this hurts them every time they pay the hydro bill, every time they pay the heating bill. They want their kids to play soccer; they want their kids to be able to play hockey; they want their kids to be able to play baseball. Every time you get one of those bills—I got it for my son the other day. "Here is what the fee is for your son to play hockey next year"—HST on top of the bill. My daughter likes to play soccer. We got the bill from the soccer association. "Here's what it is"—HST on top of the bill. My son likes to play baseball. He gets the notice from the baseball association. "Here's what it costs, and here's the HST." This is a government that, with a vengeance, has gone after low-, modest- and middle-income families, and those modest- and middle-income families are feeling the pinch.

What's the other major plank of this government's financial direction? It is to once again give Bay Street big tax cuts. I spent the last couple of weeks going through the results for all the different banks. I searched in vain to find one of the banks that needs a major tax cut. I couldn't find one. I went through all of the insurance companies looking for one that needed a major tax cut. I couldn't find one. But that is where this government is going to place a major part of its budget direction: on giving corporations who have very healthy profits even more.

I was struck to read the Statistics Canada information, because this government says, "If we give these corporations tax cuts, they'll make major investments in machinery and equipment and they'll start jobs." The StatsCan

analysis says that with all of the corporate tax cuts that we've seen, do you know what corporations have been doing with the money? They haven't been investing in machinery or equipment; they've been stuffing it in their pockets. That's Statistics Canada, an independent third party. They've been stuffing it in their pockets.

I'm trying to make sense of this. Ordinary folks, who have less income than ever before, who've seen a real decline in their income, are being hit with a major tax increase, the HST, on just about everything they do. People are seeing a major increase in their hydro bill; they're seeing door-to-door rip-off artists loosened to come after them with the most nefarious and sleazy kinds of behaviour. People increasingly have a hard time paying their bills, and this government's approach to them is to stick it to them even more.

On the other side of the ledger, you know the very people who weren't hurt by the recession, didn't see a decline in their income, didn't see a decline in their bonuses, didn't see a decline in their pocketbooks whatsoever, the minions of Bay Street, are going to get another few billion dollars of government largesse. I'm trying to figure out, how does this make any sense? How does this make any sense?

One of the realities for me is that I've been here for a while and I remember these same Liberals just a few years ago, when Mike Harris and Ernie Eves proposed corporate tax cuts. These people did somersaults to condemn them and say that corporate tax cuts were wrong. I remember just a few years ago, when George Bush was running the United States and his answer to economic problems was to cut corporate taxes, cut corporate taxes, cut corporate taxes; I remember these same Liberals doing backflips, saying, "This is stupid. This doesn't make any sense."

When Stephen Harper became Prime Minister of Canada just a few years ago and announced that his agenda was to cut corporate taxes, cut corporate taxes, I remember the Premier standing up and saying, "This is wrong. This is the wrong direction. We shouldn't be doing this." And yet, what do I see today? The same Liberals who did backflips over Mike Harris's corporate tax reductions, the same Liberals who used to sneer at George Bush, the same Premier who used to condemn Stephen Harper for his corporate tax cuts, have now joined the chorus of saying, "More corporate tax cuts."

I think the ordinary person is trying to make some sense of this. When ordinary people have less income than they had four or five years ago and see a deliberate strategy by this government to increase their tax burden through the HST and go after modest- and middle-income families with a vengeance, when modest- and middle-income families see their hydro bills skyrocketing and HST appearing on just about every kind of bill they get, they're looking for some sort of response from the government, but what they get is a government that says, "Oh, Bay Street, the banks and the finance companies need a tax reduction. The oil companies need a tax reduction."

This is crazy. This makes no sense at all. I'm sure most people, most ordinary folks, didn't read the Statistics Canada study. But when an independent body like Statistics Canada looks at all the corporate tax cuts that have been made, both federally and provincially, and says there's no evidence that it's created jobs, there's no evidence whatsoever that this has resulted in investments in plant, investments in technology or investments in machinery, but there's lots of evidence that banks and insurance companies and oil companies have simply taken the corporate tax reduction and stuck it in their pockets and used it to fund more corporate bonuses and used it to fund more corporate pay increases and used it to fund more dividends to well-off investors, I think the average person would really have some questions about this, and they ought to have some questions about this. They ought to be asking—cut through all the McGuinty Liberal rhetoric—who are they really governing for? Who are they really governing for? It certainly can't be that ordinary person out there who's struggling to pay the hydro bill, struggling to pay the heating bill and struggling to make ends meet. It can't be that person out there who's lost their job and is looking to get a new job, when all of the StatsCan evidence indicates that these corporate tax cuts are not going to result in new jobs. They're simply a transfer of financial resources from people who are already struggling to people who are already well off.

1620

I hope at some point one of the government members tries to provide an explanation to all this because that's what's happening. That is clearly what is happening, and I think to any reasonable person this is very clearly wrong. It's taking us in the wrong direction. It is making life more difficult for the average Ontarian. It is certainly going to result, I think, in more and more people falling through the cracks—and falling more severely through the cracks—and yet there is no evidence that this government's budgetary direction is going to do anything positive, anything progressive, for all those people across Ontario who have witnessed this spectacle over the last couple of weeks.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I thank the member for his comments. I only have two minutes to respond, so I'll spend a bit of it on his remarks relevant to the HST.

If you ask the general population—people living in any province—who is probably the one person in Canada today whom you would say is most against a tax increase of any type, most people would probably say, "Stephen Harper." But when it came to the HST in the province of Ontario, what had to happen? Stephen Harper had to sign a deal with the province of Ontario allowing us to implement the HST in this province.

What's even more interesting—and I'm not criticizing it—he signed a deal allowing Ontario to do it. If the HST is so bad for people, why would Stephen Harper, the guy most people think is the big tax fighter, sign that deal with the province of Ontario?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order.

Mr. Bill Mauro: And why would Stephen Harper transfer \$4.2 billion to the province of Ontario to allow them to do it? And here's the bigger one: Why would Stephen Harper, in addition to all those things, take on responsibility for 1,000 employees—the transfer of people who used to collect the provincial tax and no longer have to do it—if the HST was so bad? Stephen Harper from this day forward has taken on responsibility for the 1,000 people who used to do it in the province of Ontario. That's what he's done. That's absolutely what he's done.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Oxford.

Mr. Bill Mauro: At the federal level the PCs supported it, the Liberals supported it and the Bloc supported it. At the provincial level we supported it, and quite frankly we all know that the Conservatives support it, but they now oppose it. One party opposes it: the NDP. At the federal and provincial levels there is only one that opposes it. So people are going to be focused on that and talking about that.

I've only got 20 seconds left. I want to remind people in northern Ontario, in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, that in this budget the NDP voted against a \$10-million increase in the northern Ontario heritage fund, up to \$100 million, which contrasts with what they did in the last big recession when they took all \$60 million out and put in it general revenue.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I believe the compassion level and sincerity of the member for Kenora–Rainy River were certainly there. In terms of—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The Minister of Community Safety.

Mr. John O'Toole: Through you, Madam Speaker, at least I can trust what they say. Trust becomes a very, very important part of this discussion we're having back and forth on behalf of the people of Ontario.

What I really am concerned about, though, is the lack of sincerity by the members of the McGuinty government. They refuse to listen to the facts. The facts are these: Every single hour of every single day, Premier McGuinty is spending \$1.8 million more than they're taking in in revenue.

Don Drummond is now going to do a study for them—he's a respectable man—and the study is going to say, "Here's how to fix the problem." What is the Premier doing? He's the leader. When he says "fix the problem," the rumours in the hallway are that if he's elected—I hope not; I don't wish him any harm—Premier McGuinty is going to raise the HST again.

Interjection: That's your rumour.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no. I'm hearing from the pages. I'm hearing it from my constituents. So here's my—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order.

Mr. John O'Toole: If not, if this is false, I want the Premier to stand up tomorrow and say, "I promise not to raise your taxes." But he said the same thing in 2003.

You can't be trusted. You lose—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, I'm speaking for my constituents, and they've lost trust—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently, as always, to the member from Kenora–Rainy River. He talked about how ordinary people are affected. He talked about his own family. I know his children, and he talked to me about how the HST affects them: affects their hockey team, affects the baseball team, the soccer team. He also talked about ordinary people, his constituents, how they're falling through the cracks because of the HST and the lack of consumer protection around hydro scammers. They are out there. They're out there every day. They've come to my door lately, too, and they are there. They are not to be dissuaded until there is strong enough legislation.

But I also want to spend a minute on the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan. He always amuses me in this place. He amuses me not because he's funny, but because he's so earnest. He is so earnest in trying to put the blame for the HST somewhere else. He's so earnest in trying to blame the federal Conservatives for the action that this government took in implementing the HST. Yes, the federal government offered a carrot, but this is the government that took it; this is the government that took this carrot.

I just find it hard to believe when a government campaigns and government members campaign and say things against the harmonizing of the sales tax in advance of the election, and the day after, the deal has already been struck. The finance minister had already had the meeting; the deal was already struck before it was announced, before the backbenchers even knew anything about it. Yet even though that was done to them, they still tried to pretend that it was okay, because this was a deal made with Stevie. "Our friend Stevie in Ottawa helped us, and he should shoulder some of the blame, too." That's the reality. That's what's really going on around here.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: First of all, I want to say to the member, he tries to imply that municipal property taxes have gone up because of this government. In fact, the facts are exactly the opposite. This government, in very difficult economic times, chose instead to continue to upload the costs which had been downloaded by the previous government on municipalities. Every municipal leader I have talked to has complimented the government on this except the member.

He also talks about the HST. I noticed that Jack Layton was in Nova Scotia praising the HST. You will

recall, Madam Speaker, that Darrell Dexter, the Premier of Nova Scotia—this is the NDP when in power, not the NDP in opposition. The NDP in Nova Scotia raised it to 15%.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Jack loves it.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Of course, Jack likes that, when they raise it.

I remembered that, when in power in Saskatchewan, the NDP closed 52 rural hospitals. Now, they weren't trying to be mean to people, but they closed 52 rural hospitals. I remember Janice MacKinnon, the then Minister of Finance, saying how difficult it was. In fact, I saw her on TVO the other day. She was speaking favourably of the tax measures of this government and implying that the NDP was being political and unrealistic in their evaluation.

I remember when we were trying to assist the automotive industry. The opposition was coming from the Conservatives and from the NDP. Ken Lewenza and Buzz Hargrove said, "You're moving in the right direction." As a result of this investment, we have General Motors and Chrysler bouncing back.

I would like to recommend to the member as well one last thing: that he read the book *Minding the Public Purse* by Janice MacKinnon, the former treasurer of Saskatchewan.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Kenora–Rainy River has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Let me respond first to the minister. This is a minister who likes to talk about everything else happening in the world except what's happening in Ontario. This is the budget of Ontario. I remind you it's people in Ontario who are hurting. I remind you it is the banks and insurance companies in Ontario that are already very profitable. They don't need another handout from the McGuinty government. When are you going to realize it's the people of Ontario that you're responsible to, not what may happen somewhere else in the globe?

1630

I'm actually proud of the Dexter government. They said they would take the HST off the heating bill and they said they would take the HST off the hydro bill, and, unlike Liberals, that's exactly what they did. You may find that painful, but it was the right thing to do.

I want to, just for a minute, also address the issue of property taxes. I invite the minister to go to all those municipalities where the McGuinty government says that you've stopped the downloading, that you've reversed the downloading, but they look for the money and they don't find it. I can tell you, I am getting letters from municipality after municipality in northern Ontario that say, "They told us they reversed the downloading, but when we look for the money, it's not there." That is the reality.

Finally, let me just respond to the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan. It is amazing. Yes, the Harper government offered the McGuinty Liberals a deal on the HST, but the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan some-

how wants you to believe that somebody grabbed the Premier's hand and forced him to sign—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate. At the outset, I'll say I'm sharing my time with the member from Pickering–Scarborough East.

Certainly, when it's budget time, everybody seems to get selective memory. They seem to be able to draw points as they recall them. I guess that's all part of the game and part of the process and perhaps that's how it should be. I'll tell you the feedback I'm getting in my own community on this budget, given the economic times that people in my riding understand. I think they have the same concerns that I've heard expressed by all three parties today. Those concerns would be such things as health care, education, child care, children's mental health, all the things that Ontario and its citizens have become used to being concerned about when it comes to budget time. They want to see those issues either expanded upon or they want to see them managed in a responsible way. So it's a pleasure to join the debate this afternoon and just speak for a few minutes on the feedback that I'm receiving and what this budget means for my own community and what it means for other communities in the province of Ontario.

My take on the budget is that it continues the government's support of the economic recovery that we're seeing in the province when compared to other jurisdictions. When you look around the world, obviously everyone has suffered as a result of the economic downturn. It's the worst economic downturn I've seen in my lifetime, that's for sure, and I hope I never see another one. But when that happens, governments—jurisdictions—have to take into account the economic times and have to plan not only for a way to get through it but for a way to come out of it.

I think this budget is a clear indication that we've done the right things. Did we get everything right? Probably not. I don't think there has been a government in history that has got everything right every time. Have we done a good job of managing our way through the economic hard times? I'd say we have, and I think this budget brings in a renewed focus on the elimination of the deficit that I'm sure all parties in the House agree is something that we do need to deal with. I know people in my riding want it dealt with, and they want it dealt with in a strategic way and a responsible way. I think what the budget places before us is a plan that both protects our public services and yet at the same time plots a plan that allows to us to reach a balanced budget.

We value our public services in Oakville—our public schools, our public health care system, our transportation system—the same way that I think anybody around the province would in any one of the communities that we all have the privilege of representing in the House today. If there's one thing that I would say that typifies this budget, it is that it's an investment in people. It's an investment in those services such as education and health

care that really typify what I think all three parties try to seek when they go out at election time and they set forward a platform for the people of Ontario.

There are some highlights that I'd like to concentrate on, but one thing that has really struck me is that often when you bring in a policy, you get a mixed reaction. You get some people who are in favour of it and some people who are opposed to it. I have to say that to date I haven't had a single parent who has a four- or five-year-old enrolled in full-day learning come up to me and say, "You know, it's not working," "I think it's a bad thing," or "I think you made a mistake." Overwhelmingly, 100% of the people that I have had any feedback from have told me that they think full-day kindergarten is one of the best things this government has ever done, that this House has ever approved. By 2014, every school in this province will have full-day learning. Now, I don't care what party you're from: That is a good thing. Parents in the province of Ontario say that that is the type of thing they want to see more investment in.

There's the creation of more than 60,000 new student spaces in Ontario's colleges and universities by 2015 so that every qualified student, everybody who's worked hard and has got the marks, is able to go on to post-secondary education. I have a fantastic post-secondary education institution in my riding of Oakville, Sheridan College. They're prepared to take more students. They want to take more students. They're training young people to take on the world. When you look at the field of animation, we've got one of the top institutions right in my community, right at Sheridan College, right here in the province of Ontario.

If you go to the other end of the age spectrum, you ask, "What's in it for seniors?" When you see the expansion in pharmacy services, something that seniors have been asking for, and support for more people under the Ontario drug benefit program, you realize that the province is trying to balance this budget, and it's trying to do things that are going to positively impact on the lives of people both young and old.

We also have—and I think all parties have spoken in support of this in the past when there was a realization that not every woman in province of Ontario who was at risk was receiving the breast cancer screening that they should. This program is something that now can be paid for and accommodated within provincial funds through the budget.

But there's one item that really stands out as a result of some work I did with members of all three parties here, and that's the funding that's been set aside for a comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy for the province of Ontario. Rightly so, and I think showing a lot of wisdom, we're starting with children and youth first. The funding is \$257 million over the next three years. It starts out this year at \$76 million, and by 2013-14 will have risen to \$93 million.

I had the pleasure of acting as Chair of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions for the province, and was able to work with members of all

parties: France Gélinas, for example, from the NDP; those from the Conservative Party, Christine Elliott and Sylvia Jones; Helena Jaczek and Jeff Leal—I'm afraid to leave anybody out here.

Mr. Michael Prue: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: The honourable member is supposed to name people by their ridings. He hasn't named a single person by their riding, and everyone by their name. I think that's contrary—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): A warning to the member.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: That obviously is a major point, and I will stand by it.

Getting back to the major issue of children's mental health and addictions, what I was trying to do is be nice—and perhaps I won't be nice anymore—and just say I enjoyed working with members from all three parties. I won't go through each one of the ridings. I was going to. But certainly, each one of those persons, I think, despite the protestations of the member from Beaches–East York, deserves the praise and admiration of this House for the tough work that I saw each one of those people put into what is a very, very important issue to the people not only in Oakville but in the province of Ontario, and not only in southern Ontario. Certainly, the travels of the committee up to the north really drove home the point that we need to do something for children and youth in this province, that mental health and addiction issues have been ignored by all levels of government of all stripes for far too long and that it was time to start to take those steps.

Having said that, you could say there was every reason for the government not to invest in this. When you looked at the economic times, you knew we were going to have to be rational, we were going to have to be reasonable and responsible with the province's finances. But I'm very, very proud that our government chose to make those investments in these services because they're going to pay dividends in the future. It's the sort of thing that anybody, I think, would understand is a wise investment and one that should be supported. And it's just an investment; it's just a start. There has to be more to come, but the journey of a thousand miles starts with one step, and this is that one step. This is the sort of step that I think is going to really make a difference in the lives of young people.

1640

I've got some quotes here, one from a gentleman I've known for a long time, Ellis Katsof. Ellis is the CEO of Pathstone Mental Health. He says that this is "a significant breakthrough and a fantastic recognition of the needs of these children, youth and their families. This is the largest infusion of dollars we've had in children's mental health in probably 20 years."

Gordon Floyd, president and CEO of Children's Mental Health Ontario, says this: "The decision that this government has made to invest in child and youth mental health is a terrific decision. It's a really smart decision for families. These investments are going to help thousands

and thousands of kids who are struggling with mental health and addictions. It's going to help their families, it's going to help them succeed in life and it's going to help them succeed in school. Lots of credit to this government, not only for making a move on children's mental health but for doing it in such a big way. We haven't seen an investment like this in children's mental health services in decades; you've got to go back to the Davis government to see this kind of a move for children's mental health. I give top marks to the government."

That's the sort of quote that I think any government of any stripe would be proud of at budget time: When you've been able to invest in a strategic way in the services that are most important to people, and yet at the same time bring in a financial plan to accompany that that's reasonable, that's responsible, that is the sort of way that we would run our own households, that is the hallmark of a budget that should be supported.

I understand that it's the job of the official opposition and the third party to criticize the budget and to, I hope, propose some constructive changes. I'd like to know how it could be made better. I think it's easy to understand people when they say they're opposed to something. From time to time, I think it's incumbent on us all to tell other people what we're in favour of. I'd be looking for plans from the other two parties as to how they would change this budget in a meaningful, responsible way. I haven't heard that yet.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Are we sharing—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Oh, sorry. The member from Pickering-Scarborough East.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Thank you, Speaker. I know that with the process we have, sometimes we jump into questions and comments.

Just in the few minutes I have—because many around here know that I won't be in this place after September. This will be my last budget. But I was sitting thinking today that it wasn't that long ago that my kids would come along and they'd go, "Dad, I think you've got a grey hair there." I'd deny it. After a while, I said, "I've earned every one of those, and the four of you, my children, are responsible for that." Actually, today is the birthday of my eldest daughter. She has a family of three, and two of her children are just about ready to leave high school this year and next year, as the case might be. My wife's parents are still alive, and they're up in the Bridgenorth-Peterborough area. They're in their early to mid-80s, one of whom suffers from Parkinson's. We heard the member from Brant today speaking about his brother, I believe it was. Three of our four children have family. One of them is still looking to have a family.

I want to preface my comments about the budget around my experience that way because budgets, for me, are sometimes less about the number crunch and whether there's a tax change for corporations or whether there's X number of dollars going to some program. For me, it's

about the social policy structure that I came here for, and that was to ensure, as best I could, that I can contribute to the type of quality of life and public services that people in this province should expect.

I think this budget continues to speak to those things. I think it continues to speak to them in a great variety of ways, and I'm going to take the little bit of time that's available just to speak about a couple and to highlight some of them so that I think people understand that there are initiatives being undertaken that are intended to make the conditions of this province better.

I want to speak to the intention in the budget to establish breast cancer screening exams for some 90,000 more women in high-risk areas in the age ranges of 30 to 49. It speaks to a specific need that's there in Ontario in the health area for women who are at high risk of breast cancer and doing that early screening. I think it also speaks to our objectives in ensuring we enhance and build upon the quality of health care we have in this province.

I went to my own physician just a couple of weeks ago for my—it should be annual, but often the time frame around here gets stretched, so it could have been 18 months. He suggested, after doing all the tests, that he wanted to refer me to a specialist, just as a precautionary measure—nothing specific. But nonetheless, I'm happy that we have the capacity in this province; that when I see my general practitioner on a regular or not-so-regular basis, he has the capacity to take the interest to say, "You know, at your age, I think that you should be going to see this individual, just on a precautionary basis. I don't think there's anything happening, but I want to be sure." I can get that referral in a matter of a few weeks and be able to get to see the specialist. I'm particularly proud of a province that provides that kind of health care, and I think this budget, in that way, speaks to that.

I think our budgets over the last number of years have spoken to health care in particular as one of the priority areas. I know in my own community just this past year, we completed the expansion and redevelopment of the Ajax-Pickering campus of the Rouge Valley Health System, a very significant health care provision within our community. I'm not unique in that. There are members throughout this place who have had that experience, whether it has been a new hospital or a redeveloped hospital or an expansion or new services being provided over the past seven or eight years. I think our continued investment in health care—no one in this room would disagree—is important. It's a matter of the level of priority one chooses to put on it.

On the education front, this budget will continue the investment in full-day learning, or junior kindergarten to full day. By 2014-15, I think is our time frame, we will see full-day kindergarten implemented throughout the province. It's an important step for those young people to have that capacity, that early-learning capacity, of full-day learning. It's a significant change in our education system. It will begin to do the things that the youngest of my grandchildren will be able to take advantage of when they enter the school system, and I hope it sets the stage

for them so that they will have the opportunities throughout their life to have the quality of education that is being set at that very early age.

We're looking to have additional funding for some 60,000 additional spaces in colleges and universities through to 2015. I look in my own riding and in surrounding areas that get serviced by my riding because there's not a university or college in there. I've developed connectors over the years with Durham College and the University of Ontario Institute of Technology. I see the kind of work they're doing, and the opportunities being provided. I look at their nuclear engineering program at the university level. I look at the colleges developing those technicians who can work in the nuclear industry, because the nuclear industry is important in Durham and it will continue to be important, I think, in Canada.

I also look to the other side of my riding, which I inherited at the last election: the Scarborough portion. I look at the University of Toronto Scarborough campus and their president, who comes out there to speak and talks about it being kind of the hidden jewel of the University of Toronto. It's tucked away; people don't see it as readily where it sits. It's a large facility. But for the president to be speaking about how important that campus is going to be and the investment the government has made jointly, both the provincial and federal governments, during the need for infrastructure investing, to build the new academic building that will be the largest single structure since the university started in 1967—a very, very significant change to that university campus.

I'm particularly proud of the fact that we have made the commitment at a time when it was necessary to invest in infrastructure; that we made the commitment to invest in that university, and the university in Oshawa, and the college in Oshawa and Whitby, and colleges and universities throughout this province. I think it's going to stand our young people in good stead for years to come.

I'm pleased to read here in the budget document that no qualified and keen student will be denied access to our system because of their ability to pay. It's a statement about intent. The details will have to be worked out, I'm sure. I think it's important to hear that qualified students, keen students, those who want to go on, will have that opportunity, regardless of their direct capacity to pay for it. That's an important stage for years to come.

1650

We have a significant deficit at this point. We, in this place, all know why that deficit is there. We've talked about the fact that we've gone through the worst recession, the cataclysmic change in the economic climate that happened in the fall of 2008. We watched our Toronto market drop 800 points in one day. It's a change we all hope we will not experience ever again, but it changed the dynamics of governments throughout the world. It changed the dynamics of government here in Ontario for an extended period of time.

But we used that, I think, as an opportunity, particularly an opportunity to invest in infrastructure, an oppor-

tunity to create jobs that were needed so desperately at that time and to put money where it could best be used to begin rebuilding the infrastructure in this province: roads and sewers and water, colleges and universities, hospitals. We made those important investments at that point in time, and I believe that will stand us in good stead in the years to come.

There is a plan to move from deficit to a balanced budget. It's a challenging plan. We're going to get there, but we're not going to get there as rapidly as most would like; probably not as rapidly as I would like. But I think it's important that we continue to make the important investments in health and education in particular, as key components of our future, to continue to make us a strong province. This budget does much of that.

I'm pleased to be able to stand in support of the 2011-12 budget. I'm pleased to have had the opportunity to participate in the budget development process for a few years—not this one—and look forward to continuation of the debate and the opportunity to vote on this budget.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I've listened intently to the two speakers, but I really want to speak to the statements by the member from Pickering-Scarborough East. As always, he speaks in a very balanced tone; he's not overly partisan. He is a pleasure to listen to, and I have known the member for a long time, from when we were both mayors and often had to go to similar things.

He talked about a couple of things that are near and dear to my heart: first of all, his family. It was nice to hear how well they're all progressing and how he bears them in mind.

The second thing he talked about was the University of Toronto Scarborough campus. Although I don't get a chance to go out there very much anymore, that is my alma mater and I was there in the first class of 1967 when there were, I think, some 400 students. Today, there are many, many thousands; it is an absolutely huge place. I think that governments of all stripes over the years have wisely invested in places of higher education, and certainly that is a testament to the University of Toronto—the staff, the faculty, government, students and everyone who has built that university into a first-class place to be.

Last but not least, he touched on infrastructure and how important it was for the government to have done this during the time of the recession, and I could not disagree with a single word. The only thing I can say is: Would that the government was continuing to do that, because the government did, of course, have that option and chose instead to make corporate tax cuts. I do not believe—and I'm sure the member does not believe and might want to comment—that we are going to get as many jobs created out of corporate tax cuts as we would have, had we invested that same \$3 billion in infrastructure. Certainly, municipalities could have used the money. Certainly, people would have been put to employment, and the economists tell us it would have made a lot more sense. I hope he might comment on that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's always interesting how perceptions vary. The member from Oakville talked about the people of Oakville who thought the government was doing an okay job managing, and yet just across one broad avenue where my riding begins, the people of Oakville feel very strongly that this government has increased taxes. They may not know the figure, but they understand that this government has increased taxes by 73%, while the economy has only increased 9% or 10%, and they know that that shortfall comes out of their pockets; it comes out of their tax dollars. They know that the HST has increased their costs. It has not been a revenue-neutral thing. They know that their pockets are lighter because of the HST, and they know that this government is the cause of that. They know that their electricity bills are going through the roof. They know that they're paying twice as much for electricity today as they did seven or eight years ago, when this government took office. They know that.

I don't know whether the people north of Upper Middle Road are more attuned to politics, or whether they take a more critical view of politics, but I suspect that the people south of Upper Middle Road, all the way down to Lake Ontario, in what is referred to as the Oakville riding, are equally attuned as to what is happening to the money in their wallets. It's this government that is helping itself to a disproportionate amount of that money, which is causing the hardships of families who are desperately trying to meet their mortgages.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much for giving me an opportunity to speak about the comments that were made by the member from Oakville and the member from Pickering-Scarborough East. I really appreciated their comments about the implementation of full-day learning, and I agree with them wholeheartedly that this is one program that I keep hearing about in my riding of Ottawa Centre. Parents are very excited, grandparents are very excited, for an opportunity for their children to attend junior and senior kindergarten for a full day and to have that advantage, pedagogically speaking, to learn on a full-day basis and excel as they move on to grade 1 and beyond.

One of the important things that I notice in Bill 173 is in schedule 10, and that is an amendment to the Education Act—which I think is something we have spoken of in this Legislature before—to give school boards a choice in terms of how they provide before- and after-care for our four- and five-year-olds who may be in full-day kindergarten. Basically, what the amendment does is it gives an opportunity for boards, if they choose to do so, to have third party providers provide before- and after-care. I know, in my community and in many communities across the province, a lot of excellent not-for-profit organizations that provide before- and after-care. By making the kinds of amendments that are being proposed

in Bill 173 to the Education Act, it will allow for boards to have those third party not-for-profit providers stay and continue to provide quality, affordable, seamless before- and after-care, as recommended in the Pascal report.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments? The member from Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to thank the members from Pickering-Scarborough East, Beaches-East York—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Excuse me. We're still on questions and comments. There's one more. Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: Certainly. Sitting next to my colleague here—wrong seat; sorry, Madam Speaker—and the member from Pickering-Scarborough East, I was recalling when I first actually had an encounter with the member, and that was when there were these forced amalgamations taking place all across the province of Ontario. At that time, there was a debate about whether Pickering should be amalgamated with Ajax. I remember Steve Parish, the mayor of Ajax, was against amalgamation. I think our member here was on the other side of the issue.

But, you know, it was a very interesting look at that part of the province, Durham region, growing quickly—a lot of young families—and just recollecting when he talked about family and his own four children and the reality of what we do here connecting with them. Sometimes that part of Ontario, Durham region, doesn't get the attention it certainly rightfully deserves. He's tried to do that in his years here in this Legislature. In the work he has done on the finance committee and everywhere, he's made sure that we haven't forgotten about the needs of that growing part of Ontario.

Then we have the member from the other side of the GTA, in the beautiful area of Oakville-Trafalgar, and the needs that it has.

In this budget, you can see that there's been an attempt to try to deal with all the diversities of this province—

1700

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Now the member from Oakville has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Once again, my thanks to the members from Pickering-Scarborough East, Beaches-East York, Halton, Ottawa Centre and Eglinton-Lawrence, the gentleman who just spoke.

I find that the people of Ontario and certainly in my own community of Oakville are very proud people, and they're proud when we accomplish something. When we lead the way in something, they express that pride. When they hear we've got some of the lowest income tax rates in the country and we've got some of the lowest corporate tax rates not just in the country but in all of North America; when they discover that our capital city of Toronto has become a top 10 global financial centre for the first time—it's closing the gap on Chicago for number two in all of North America; when they know that our universities now are ranked as some of the top in

the entire world, our post-secondary education rate is the highest in the western world and we're the only country in the world where secondary school performances have improved over the past five years—when you look at the results and you look at the financial plan that accompanies those results, I think people in Ontario have a lot to be proud of.

And, yes, to the member from Halton, they expect that the budget will be managed in a responsible way. But they want the new hospitals, they want the new schools, they want the QEW widened—they want all the things that the member from Halton simply couldn't deliver because they didn't have a plan. Even in good times, the member from Halton was part of a government that brought in a \$5.5-billion deficit and just forgot to tell the people of Ontario.

So I think if there's a financial plan that accompanies the investment in public services, that's what the people in my community want to see and that's what the people in Ontario want to see. This is a budget that delivers that balance. It looks after the needs and the interests of people while at the same time it shows that we're good stewards of the tax dollar as well.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the 2011 budget, and I hope to clarify some of the erroneous facts I've been hearing from across the way in the last number of days as we speak to this budget bill.

Before I get into the part of the bill where I will put my focus, which is the risk management program, I want to take a minute to talk about schedule 1 of the bill. The explanatory note says, "Subsection 25(4) of the Agricultural and Horticultural Organizations Act currently deems a local organizing committee that hosts the annual International Plowing Match to be an agricultural society for the purposes of a tax exemption under the Retail Sales Tax Act. The tax is no longer applicable and, consequently, subsection 25(4) of the act is repealed."

The government will tell that you this is a housekeeping motion—removing a regulation that doesn't apply anymore. However, they will likely fail to mention that this is just one of the exemptions that we lost when they implemented the HST. Previously, agricultural fairs were exempt from sales tax. Now they are hit with a 13% HST. This is just one more place where the McGuinty government and their HST have increased our cost of living. Other examples include everything from hydro, gas, postage stamps, Internet, vitamins, vet bills, hotel rooms, and the list goes on.

The McGuinty government may consider getting rid of these regulations housekeeping, but Ontario families see them as another reminder that this government doesn't understand the situation they are facing—one more reminder that this tax-and-spend government is out of touch with Ontario's families. Ontario families are looking for relief, and were looking for relief in this budget. They were looking for something that would help them make ends meet. Instead, they got more of the

same: a government that is addicted to increasing spending. That means that if you are allowed to continue, there will be more tax increases. If they stay in power, the tax increases will not stop.

I want to point out that with all of that increased spending, the amount budgeted for agriculture this year is actually \$52.6 million less than the budget last year. If this government can implement the business risk management program with less money than they had allocated last year, why did they wait so long? Nothing has changed other than farmers have suffered another year and we are getting very close to the next provincial election. I think election fever may have already affected a few of the members on the opposite side of the House.

As you know, last week we had a vote on the Minister of Finance's motion. Some of the members opposite seemed a little confused as to what they were voting on, including, unfortunately, a few cabinet ministers. I want to just clarify for them that last Wednesday's vote was on whether or not the House approves in general the budgetary policy of this government. It was not, as the government claims, a vote on business risk management. Our caucus had a very clear commitment to business risk management for years. We clearly support it. What I cannot support, and what our caucus does not support, is the tax-and-spend policies of the Liberal government.

I just want to point out to the members opposite that attempts like that will not fool farmers. They will not believe them. First of all, farmers are far smarter than the McGuinty government seems to think. Secondly, we have been working with farmers in the agriculture industry on this issue for years. They know that we were standing beside them pushing the government to do the right thing and take action for Ontario's farmers. They know that the McGuinty government's proposal is an attempt to match the commitment that we made two years ago and have reiterated in this Legislature and at agriculture meetings and events numerous times since then.

I want to commend Ontario's farmers and agricultural leaders for all the work they've done to develop the risk management program. I especially want to recognize the grain and oilseed farmers for their leadership on this issue. Their work contributed greatly to the entire agricultural industry. Each sector has adopted the successful model developed by the Ontario Grains and Oilseeds to create something that would meet the needs of their farmers. I know that has not been easy. It required a huge amount of time, research and consultation.

I want to commend the members of the Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition and their leadership, Don Kenny, Henry Stevens, Brian Gilroy, Wilma Jeffray, Curtis Royal, Judy Dirksen, Bette Jean Crews and Markus Wand.

Beyond the time invested in the development of the program, these farmers and agricultural organizations had the challenge of convincing the government to implement it. I know that all of these people have had multiple meetings with MPPs and the civil service, they have

written numerous letters and they have held breakfasts, lunches and dinners here at Queen's Park to talk to MPPs about the need to support Ontario's farmers.

I realize that many people may still not be familiar with business risk management. I want to take a few minutes to explain how we got here. The need for risk management programs for Ontario farmers is not new. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture has asked for a risk management program not only in this budget but in last year's budget and the budget before that.

In 2007, shortly before the last election and after several years of asking, the Grain Farmers of Ontario finally got a business risk management program. It was a three-year pilot. We all know that generally a pilot program is a test to see if the program is successful, and this one was.

So what did the McGuinty government do at the end of 2009 when the three years were up? They refused to continue the program. On December 8, 2009, the Grain Farmers of Ontario came to Queen's Park for a breakfast. All through the minister's remarks, I know they kept waiting for the announcement. So did I. But she didn't make one. She thanked them for working with her, said positive things about the program and then sat down and let the program expire. When farmers needed stability and predictability, the McGuinty government kept telling them that they couldn't continue the program without federal support.

Farmers had to make planting decisions and get operating loans without knowing whether they had a program in place. A program that requires farmers to beg for an extension each year is neither predictable nor bankable.

At the end of July 2010, the government finally announced that they would extend the program for the 2010 crop year, but at the end of that year, once again, farmers were left not knowing whether they had the protection of a business risk management program. So once again, the grain farmers came to Queen's Park to hold a breakfast, and once again, they left still waiting for the announcement.

At the same time as grain farmers were fighting for their extensions, other Ontario farmers were fighting to hold on to their farms. Many sectors were experiencing high input cost and low market prices. Pork and beef farmers were facing long downturns in the market that meant they couldn't qualify for support under Agri-Stability. Since 2007, Ontario's productive sow herds have declined by over 20%.

During the recent pre-budget hearings, we heard about the impact the losses had in the livestock sector. At least one feed mill has already closed. There have been layoffs in the Burlington processing plant. Several transport companies have closed or been sold. Farm animal veterinarians have merged practices or switched to pet care.

I want to thank all the farmers and agricultural leaders who worked with Tim Hudak and me during the time and shared their information.

1710

In September 2009, at the International Plowing Match in Earleton, Tim Hudak committed that one of the priorities of a PC government would be working with industry to develop a smart risk management system for sectors that do not have supply management.

Since that time, at the International Plowing Match in St. Thomas, the fruit and vegetable growers' convention in St. Catharines, the grain farmers' convention in London, the cattlemen's AGM in Mississauga and in meetings with farmers across the province, Tim Hudak has reiterated that support for business risk management over and over.

In 2009, around the same time that Tim made the commitment at the plowing match, agriculture sectors recognized the need to work together and present one unified voice in support of risk management. So eight of the largest non-supply-managed commodity groups joined together to form the Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition, and I want to commend them for doing that.

Unfortunately, even with all the sectors working together, they couldn't immediately convince the McGuinty government that there was a need and a responsibility to Ontario's farmers. As the member from Durham said in his statement supporting business risk management on February 16, 2010, the government was "so busy struggling with its debt and tax controversies that it doesn't have enough time to recognize agriculture."

On March 5, 2010, over a year ago, the Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition wrote to Premier McGuinty. The letter said in part:

"Ontario farmers need an immediate commitment from your government to provide the provincial investment needed to stabilize and sustain our businesses. This commitment cannot hinge on federal support being given first.

"We understand the necessity of securing a federal commitment, but without a tangible expression from your government over the next few weeks farms will be lost. We continue to be caught between the rhetoric of both levels of government. Ontario farmers deserve and need better than this and are depending on you and your government to stand up for Ontario agriculture at this critical time."

Farmers didn't ask this government to delay and wait for the federal support. Farmers wanted the support of both levels of government, but they didn't want to wait for two years. They knew the impact that that would have. They warned the government over a year ago that delaying would mean the loss of more farmers.

On March 31 last year, when we asked the Minister of Agriculture to implement the business risk management program, she instead responded by boasting about an extra \$150 million that her ministry received in the 2010 budget. And \$150 million may sound familiar. It's the amount the government claims to have allocated to implement the program this year. So once again, we are

left to wonder why farmers had to suffer through another year of losses before this program was announced. Remember, she had the \$150 million in last year's budget. Was it that they just weren't close enough to an election yet? Apparently they didn't need legislation, and they have figured out that the action, or lack of action, by another level of government does nothing to change the responsibility they have for Ontario's farmers.

On April 6, 2010, the Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition held a large town hall meeting in Stratford to demonstrate support for the business risk management program. In spite of the hundreds of farmers who showed up, the McGuinty government didn't take any action to help them. At Queen's Park, they continued to press the McGuinty government to implement the program.

On June 3, 2010, my colleague the member from Simcoe-Grey brought forward a resolution which called on the provincial government, regardless of any other level of government, to immediately implement a business risk management program. This resolution was not about letting other governments off the hook; it was about getting Ontario to do their part for our farmers. But the McGuinty government voted down the resolution on business risk management.

For those members who were confused the day we passed that other motion, the resolution was the real vote on business risk management, and every member on the McGuinty side voted for that motion.

The following day, the Ontario cattlemen issued a news release which said: "The Ontario Cattlemen's Association is thankful for the support shown in the Ontario Legislature yesterday for agriculture in this province. A resolution from Jim Wilson, PC member of provincial Parliament for the riding of Simcoe-Grey, was debated during the afternoon, but was ultimately defeated. The resolution sought a commitment from the government of Ontario in support of reforms to the national Agri-Stability program and for a premium-based business risk management program to ease the financial burden being felt by so many farmers in Ontario.

"In 2009, Ontario agriculture's net income was in the red by \$50 million, a loss that is projected to be 10 times greater—half a billion dollars—by 2010. Without feasible risk management programming, the future of industry in Ontario is uncertain.

"It is no secret that Ontario agriculture is facing very serious economic conditions,' says OCA president Curtis Royal. 'Figures recently released by Statistics Canada indicate that there is a continuing decline and a financial crisis that is much more severe than government had previously acknowledged. Despite the resolution having been defeated, Mr. Wilson has done well to make all MPPs, whether they're urban or rural, realize how dire the situation is, and we thank him for that.'

"Agricultural groups have been trying for months to get the point across that there is more at risk than Ontario's farmers and the 80,000 jobs they provide in the province. There are also spin-off jobs affected, like those

in processing and further processing of Ontario's food products. This number is estimated to exceed 600,000 jobs."

That's the end of the quote. That's the letter from the cattlemen of Ontario.

A few weeks later, following the federal-provincial-territorial meetings that produced no tangible results, the Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition sent out a news release that said, "Until the FPT ministers decide on adopting predictable and bankable programs nationally the OASC is calling on Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Mitchell to step up and invest in Ontario's farmers by funding the programs developed here in Ontario without waiting for the federal government to act."

That release was on July 14, 2010, almost nine months ago. I want to be clear: I hope that in time this will become a fully funded program with support from both levels of government. However, the action or lack of action on the part of other levels of government does not release the province of Ontario from the responsibility of supporting our farmers. We believed, and we continue to believe, that our first priority as Ontario politicians is to ensure that Ontario is helping our farmers.

Over the summer and into the fall, we continued to work with farmers and farm leaders to press the McGuinty government to implement a business risk management program based on the cost of production. Again, I want to thank the agricultural organizations for working with us and for all the information they have provided.

On December 1, 2010, I was pleased to attend the Farmers Matter town hall in Stratford, where more than 800 farmers came out to demonstrate their need for support and to work together to develop a solution. Tim Hudak and I met with the organizers of Farmers Matter and listened to their concerns. We were proud to stand with them and once again call on the McGuinty government for their share of a business risk management program. I wish the Minister of Agriculture could have been there to see and hear directly from the farmers. All farm leaders wanted for Christmas was a business risk management program, but again they were disappointed. During pre-budget consultations, agricultural organizations were clear that this was their number one priority.

A few weeks ago, Tim Hudak spoke to the Ontario Cattlemen's Association annual meeting and reiterated our commitment to working with farmers and to business risk management. They released their annual report at the meeting and called for the Ontario government "to act immediately and unilaterally to kick-start and fund their share of the program."

Due to the limited time, I can't mention all the other work that farmers and their agricultural organizations have done to get to this point, but I think that everyone recognized this was a huge effort on their part. Though they are pleased, I know that many of them are asking why we couldn't have done this sooner. In fact, I asked the minister this morning and she couldn't provide an answer.

Nothing has changed between now and 2009 when the Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition was formed, other than that we have lost more farmers, more young people rejected agriculture as a career because it wasn't viable and this government put our farmers through unnecessary suffering.

Over this time, numerous farmers have called or written because they don't know what to do. They can't afford to pay their debts. They've lost faith in government to help them. Some Ontario farmers are relying on the food bank to feed their families. Two weeks ago, the former parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture right here in this Legislature asked why the government could not have implemented this program sooner. The minister was quick to boast about the program but she didn't answer the question.

1720

Minister, let me assure you, farmers who have spent the last two years trying to hold on to their farm would like an answer. I hope that the McGuinty government has finally made this commitment because of the hard work of farmers and agriculture farm organizations, and because it is the right thing to do. But unfortunately, I fear it may be more to do with the fact that we are less than 200 days from an election.

I want to commend the farmers and farm organizations for their hard work, dedication and perseverance. We look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure this program is implemented as promised and that farmers get a permanent business risk management program that works for them. I want to thank you for allowing me to speak to the budget and particularly that part that deals with looking after our agriculture community in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened again intently to the member from Oxford. He brings a lot of experience to this House, a lot of municipal experience, but also experience that he relays—but probably not often enough—about the farming community.

As a person who has spent literally his whole life in the city, I welcome this intervention, when he speaks, to know about the troubles, the travails of our farming community, because even those of us like me who've lived their whole life in the city understand where their food comes from and the people who work so very hard to produce it.

As I listened to him, I must commend him for his steadfast support of farmers and farming organizations. He is right to contend that we should have done this a long time ago. But I also have to state that I am thankful that the government has seen fit to do so in this budget.

As I said earlier, there are two shining things in the budget which I think we can all take some pride in, and extending the management system to the farmers is one of them. I thank him for what he had to say here today, but I also have to thank the government for including this item in the budget.

Our farmers deserve the utmost of respect. They deserve to be listened to. They deserve that members of all parties take their concerns very seriously, that we strive to make sure that they have successful organizations and that it is in fact a successful place to do business here in Ontario.

I would be remiss if I didn't talk about those who work for farmers as well, and I am looking forward to the government doing equally good things some day to recognize the farm labourers, mostly who are brought from offshore, and to help them to unionize so they can have safer and better places in which to work. When the government does that, they will have closed the full circle and I can truly thank them.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Just a couple of minutes to respond to my good friend from Oxford. I'll say up front I sometimes do like what the member from Oxford has to say, but what he said today, I think it questions in fact the integrity.

One of the things that he did say was, "Why didn't the government do it sooner?" He's quite right. Why didn't the government do it sooner? I remember the days of the BSE crisis. Why didn't they do it? He's right. It should have been done sooner, because I represent rural communities. I know that when I was mayor of Brighton he closed, while he was minister, the agricultural office in my own community. He closed one in Peterborough. Then he stands here today—

Interjections.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: He was there; he should remember. He closed them. So I would question when he says that he did this—

Interjections.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I must have touched a sour note.

All I'm saying is yes, this should have been done sooner. Nobody disagrees. But they were in government for eight years. He was a Minister of Agriculture when they destroyed agriculture. Where was he? He should tell that to this House. So it's kind of, that was yesterday, this is today. Well, today, the member from Oxford should know that we did it.

I do commend the farmers, not only from my riding but all of the sector, as I was a PA to the Minister of Agriculture for some three years. I met with all those sectors. We let them work on their own to come up with their own program. It wasn't one of those things handed down by government. We worked with them, we didn't work against them, and today it is a bit rich for them to take that kind of credit.

We're here because I know how important the farming community is to this province. Yes, they're not large in numbers of votes like in urban centres, but they're citizens of our province that produce the best food and the best quality of food that this province or any part of the world could have. So we should be able to support them, but not under that rhetoric.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I do appreciate the opportunity to make a few comments on the remarks made by my colleague the member from Oxford with respect to the budget bill, Bill 173, specifically with respect to the inclusion of the business risk management program. Of course, we do recognize it as a positive element in a budget that's otherwise not very good for Ontario families, to say the very least. I think that my colleague did a great job—and has for many years—of advocating for the agricultural community and of setting out today the truth about the history that led to the announcement that was made in the budget.

I also would like to thank Ontario farmers and the work of the Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition for bringing this to the table, because the reality is that we've all known for a long time that this has been needed, and I suspect that the reason why it's being brought forward today is really more a matter of the fact that it's an election year, rather than knowing and understanding the plight of Ontario's farmers and how difficult it has been for many Ontario farmers for many years.

What is surprising to some people when I speak about this is that my riding of Whitby—Ajax—Whitby—Oshawa; it was then Whitby—Ajax—has a large agricultural component to it, particularly in the northern part of the riding. I do have the opportunity on several occasions—in fact, when the Brooklin Spring Fair comes up in June, we normally have a breakfast where we have a round table with the federal member and with myself as the provincial member to talk about some of these issues. It's a mixed farming community, from grain and oilseed farmers to dairy farmers, beef farmers and everything else in between. They have talked to us in detail for a number of years about the issues that they've been facing, so I'm glad that something finally has been done, but really, it has been long overdue. So I really am glad that my colleague the member from Oxford has been raising these issues and will continue to do so in this Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I certainly also want to add my comments to this debate. I want to, first of all, remind the member from Oxford, when he was Minister of Agriculture, of the things that happened. I know that the member from Northumberland—Quinte West has already talked about what happened in terms of our county offices.

I also want to remind the member that in the first five years of the Conservative government, we lost 1,000 farmers a year—1,000 farm families a year—because of the policies of your government. As parents, we discouraged our children, our sons and our daughters, from getting into the industry. There was no hope there for them. We wanted to have them take over our farms but it wasn't even possible.

I want to caution the member that he may put his shoulder out of joint by patting himself and his leader on the back. There is an opportunity here for you to earn

some credit in all of this, and that is to go to your federal cousins and start talking to them about participating in this program. Do you understand that the program that is now funded at \$150 million will grow to \$375 million with federal participation? Do you know what farmers can do with \$375 million of predictability, stability and bankability? Incredible things. That's the kind of thing that you can do to help the farmers. There's your opportunity, member from Oxford. Go to the federal members. Talk to them about supporting this program and putting their 60% in, because that's what we need.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Oxford has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to thank the members from Beaches—East York, Northumberland—Quinte West, Whitby—Oshawa and Lambton—Kent—Middlesex for their kind comments. I find it interesting that they had to go back a long way to find anything to say that was negative and not to comment about what I mentioned today.

I just want to point out that I have here the Ontario Farmer that arrived today. I'm sure the members opposite haven't seen it yet, but it points out the timelines, as I mentioned, in the budget and the fact that in this program, the wait was not because it wasn't ready; the first phase of the program was announced just before the last election in 2007, for the years 2007, 2008 and 2009. Then, of course, it ended, and then they reinstated it for the year 2010. When it was suggested to the minister that maybe this was done because of an election year, Minister Mitchell bristled at the suggestion that the program was finally announced as a permanent program because it was an election year. Then she said it was because this was the first opportunity she had to implement it.

1730

I just want to point out that in this bill that we're having the discussion about today—it's fair to say that somebody could have called me to order, if the Speaker had seen fit to do so, because there is not a single mention of the agriculture risk management program in the bill we're debating today because this program does not require legislation. The minister had the power, the ability and the money in the budget to have done it in the last five years. Each year, she had taken the money, putting it in another budget, and she had refused to implement this program until an election was called.

I want to point out that I support this program 100%, and I thank the minister for putting it in this budget, but she could have done it a long—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you.

Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings to announce that there has been more than six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader indicates otherwise.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We would like the debate to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal: At the outset, I want to say that I'll be sharing half of my time with the member from Eglinton-Lawrence.

This has been an interesting discussion this afternoon, particularly the remarks from the member from Oxford. I think it's time that we got the record straight. Two years ago, exactly two years ago, a group of cattle farmers in my riding came together, and I can provide you with the names. Mr. Edgar Cornish, Mr. Jack Holland, Mr. Wayne Telford, Mr. Allan Kidd and Mr. John Lunn came together as a group. They met at Edgar Cornish's farm, which is on Highway 7 East, just outside of the city of Peterborough. They came together to develop a model for a risk management program for their specific industry, which was the cattle industry.

Mr. Cornish did extensive research from around the world. He looked at various models that he thought were applicable in the province of Ontario. Indeed, these individuals came up with a plan, a risk management plan, two years ago. It wasn't the member from Oxford. It was a grassroots organization right in Peterborough that came together—

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Leal: He's been trying to take credit for it, but he has no credit at all in this issue.

They came together; they developed a plan. These six individuals then took this plan to every respective cattlemen's association across the province of Ontario to garner support and explain the plan. After that process was completed, cattlemen's associations across Ontario came together and they took this plan to the Ontario Cattlemen's Association for review and approval.

At the very same time, the now Minister of Education, then Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, brought together the coalition, which was the Ontario Cattlemen's Association, the sheep farmers, the pork farmers, the grains and oilseeds and the fruits and vegetables group, to come together in unison.

So what we had here was this group in Peterborough that forged the model, took it on the road and got support in every back concession in the province of Ontario. Indeed, we were so pleased that it was announced in this recent budget. In fact, the Minister of Agriculture, Carol Mitchell, came to my riding last Tuesday to thank those six individuals who developed this model for a risk management program in the province of Ontario. We now refer to these people across Ontario as the incredible six. So they're the ones who should get credit for developing this model.

They spent countless hours at their kitchen table. They looked at the model, they revised the model, they added to the model, and finally, they got it to a position where it was universally accepted by their umbrella organization, the Ontario Cattlemen's Association. So I think it's most appropriate that we give credit where credit is due. I can say one thing about the current Minister of Agriculture: She's never had the nickname of "padlock" Minister of Agriculture of the province of Ontario. That padlock Minister of Agriculture closed agriculture offices right

across this province, in Brighton and Peterborough, and the list goes on and on and on.

Interestingly enough, there was an article that was written in the Guelph Mercury on April 4, 2011, by a gentleman by the name of Owen Roberts. I just want to quote a couple of sections from it. It says:

"On budget day, they received from the provincial government a \$150-million permanent risk management program, an insurance plan they describe as a 'self-directed, cost-shared farmer-designed program that will help them through the market's ups and downs.'

"There's still no federal help, given that there's no federal government. But the pressure was on the province to come through, with spring planting around the corner and farmers feeling they'd waited long enough. The timing for this program was excellent, and the thanks from farmers has been profuse.

"'Ontario grain farmers should celebrate (this) news,' said Don Kenny, chair of the Guelph-based Grain Farmers of Ontario, adding that the McGuinty government's leadership 'sets a new standard in the province and ensures the stability of our family farms.' Bette Jean Crews"—she is a wonderful individual; she hails from the great riding of Northumberland—Quinte West—"chair of the Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition, said establishing the program 'was the single most important action the provincial government could have taken in the budget.'

"Curtis Royal, president of the Ontario Cattlemen's Association, called the announcement great news for Ontario farmers, rural communities and everyone involved in agriculture and agri-food."

Interjection: He's straight up as they come, Curtis.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'll say.

"It will give our farmers the tools they need to sustain their operations so they can continue to provide high quality, locally grown food to Ontario consumers," he said.

"And Wilma Jeffray"—a lot of people around here know Wilma; lovely lady—"chair of Ontario Pork, said the fact that the province took action during tough fiscal times and without the participation of the federal government 'makes this announcement that much more significant to Ontario farmers.'

"The only people who won't be celebrating this plan are federal Conservatives campaigning in rural Ontario. Why didn't Ottawa get behind a program that was so needed and desired by farmers in the province? Good question."

This is from Owen Roberts.

It's very interesting. There's a lot of chit-chat here this afternoon about the federal government and the lack of participation. We know for a fact that the current Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the previous Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, at several of the federal-provincial tables where they come together to discuss these issues, made pleas to the federal government that they should be supporting a risk management program in the province of Ontario. They

said that the agricultural base in each province in this great Dominion is slightly different and there should be customized programs to meet local provincial needs.

Those two ministers, in the past, in very eloquent and articulate terms, made the plea to the current minister, Minister Ritz, to have Ottawa participate in a risk management program so it would fit the needs of Ontario's farmers. The position of the federal government was refusal, refusal, refusal. They indicated that they couldn't participate in a customized provincial program because of WTO. That's interesting, because the magnificent six I just described to you did extensive research on the legal aspects of the WTO. As long as the program is for domestic agriculture in the province only, it won't be subject to a WTO challenge. It's interesting. The federal government should have known that, that it wouldn't be subject to a WTO challenge.

Since 1976, the province of Quebec, through the AZERA program, has always had customized programs suited to farmers in the province. So it seems to me that if the federal governments were allowing customized programs in the province of Quebec, surely they could allow for a customized program in the province of Ontario.

1740

But it's the continued position of federal governments—and Liberal governments have been included in there—that they often take Ontario for granted. Nobody should take Ontario for granted. This was a unique opportunity over the last number of years for the governments of Canada, both Liberal and Conservative, to come to the table and come up with a program customized for farmers in Ontario in the non-supply-managed sector to support a risk management program, because we know—you know, Madam Speaker, and I know—that after BSE hit in 2003, the price of cattle just tanked. Farmers in the cattle industry and increasingly in the pork industry had been using up an increasing amount of their equity to sustain their operations. Frankly, they were getting into a deep crisis. As they were using up their equity, they had no insurance program that they could take to the financial institutions to provide the banking on a year-to-year basis to sustain their agricultural operation. That's one of the reasons why there's been a significant decline in both the pork industry and the beef industry in the province of Ontario.

This budget, as I think a number of commentators have said, was probably the most significant announcement for agriculture in Ontario in probably 40 years. Some people said that it was the greatest announcement since, I believe, former Agriculture Minister Eugene Whelan brought in the supply-managed system to agriculture in Canada, which has been a godsend. It provides great prices, controls production and allows our farmers to thrive.

I'll turn it over to my good friend the member from Eglinton—Lawrence.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Eglinton—Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: Actually, I think it's very healthy for this Legislature to be spending so much time on the

importance of the agricultural sector in the province of Ontario. As you know, although I represent a riding right in the middle of Toronto, it is a good reminder of the critical importance that our agricultural families have to the economic vitality, the health and the future of protecting valuable farmland. Sometimes, we're so busy looking at new technology and the new innovations taking place that we forget the on-the-ground contributions that our farm families make across this province.

I totally support the investment that our government has made, because if the agricultural sector is strong, I think this province is strong. It's a very good reminder for us to keep that in mind. It's something that I think we should pass on to our younger people, our students and so forth, because I think they sometimes haven't had the opportunity to reflect on the critical contributions that the agricultural sector makes to the future well-being of this province.

I just want to put in some comments about some of the issues that this budget deals with in terms of the city and the riding of Eglinton—Lawrence, which I represent. In many ways, it really represents some of the sort of silent, hidden issues that are in all our communities. I know I have a wonderful organization in Eglinton—Lawrence called Delisle Youth Services. Delisle Youth Services has been in operation since 1972. What it does is it quietly and effectively reaches out to young people who are having issues in terms of their ability to cope with everyday life—sometimes, I guess, it's severe depression—a lot of challenging day-to-day things for young people.

Delisle Youth Services has been going into all of our schools, like North Toronto, Northern Secondary School and Lawrence Park. It offers counselling services, it offers advice, it offers support to the family and to the students. Just recently, through a Trillium grant, they were able to open up a new ground-floor drop-in centre for the youth in the middle of the city at Yonge and Eglinton. This budget certainly reflects on the work that Delisle Youth Services does, and that is the investment in our young people, supporting them through their mental health challenges.

In fact, I was at a meeting earlier today. The two people I was meeting with—we were discussing investments in mental health. Each one of us knew of someone in our family that had an issue with mental health. That was just out of three people. It's an issue we have not, I think, been aggressive enough on. It's sort of been something that's had a stigma attached, and luckily, we're beginning to talk about it openly.

I know when I go to speak at my high schools or grade schools—especially the high schools—on Fridays, I do mention the importance of being very, very sensitive to the needs of fellow students or our friends and family who have these issues. So this is what this budget does in terms of my community: It makes that investment in that critical area of health, mental health, which is a silent disability.

Also, this budget continues to invest in another critical area in my riding, and that is the area of public transit.

For many years, we've been eagerly awaiting the restart of the rapid transit line on Eglinton Avenue West. In 1995, I was just elected, I think, at that time, and I had just come off from being a Metro councillor and TTC chairman, and we had started the building of the Eglinton subway. To build a full bore subway from Pearson to Bathurst Street was going to cost us about \$800 million. Then, as soon as the election of Mike Harris occurred, they decided to cancel the subway.

So 16 years later we're continuing, or we are restarting, that investment in public transit. For 16 years we've waited with bated breath, dealing with bumper-to-bumper buses, diesel buses, going up and down our streets in our community. The buses can't move because there are just so many cars on Eglinton Avenue. You can go there on a Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and there are cars that are not moving from Bathurst all the way to Keele Street. This has been going on for 16 years. It didn't have to happen.

But luckily, through this budget, a portion of the money in this budget will go toward restarting the rapid transit on Eglinton Avenue that will eventually go all the way to Scarborough City Centre. So that is very, very important—not only the building of the new line but also funding the ongoing transit needs of the city of Toronto through the gas tax, where 50% of the gas tax goes to funding; 50% of the provincial gas tax goes to the city of Toronto, because it's based on ridership and we have the most ridership. So that's continuing. It has to continue.

I think our government has given over \$860 million to the city of Toronto for gas tax since its inception. That has to continue, because it's not only helping transit riders; this is helping our city's mobility. When the city is immobile, it is extremely cost-prohibitive. It's estimated by the Toronto Board of Trade that basically we could lose anywhere from—I've heard various figures—\$2 billion to \$6 billion a year in congestion. That is getting food, getting products, getting people to work, extra time in their cars, more gasoline costs, more time to make deliveries of products. Billions of dollars have been lost because of congestion. We have to continue to make investments in public transit, as this budget does.

In our schools, I would say that I am blessed. I have some of the best schools, I think, anywhere in Canada, whether it be Allenby school or whether it be John Ross Robertson, whether it be Blessed Sacrament school or whether it be Lawrence Park or Dante Alighieri school. So this budget continues to invest in these excellent schools and teachers that are continuing to excel. The elementary schools, as I've said, their test scores are coming up. Parents are happy with the investment that we're making and continuing to make in our schools. We sometimes forget that that is critically important.

1750

Also, the continuing uploading that is going on in ambulance services, ODSP and all the social services—that uploading from municipalities back up to the province is continuing in this budget. Those of you who were here when there was massive downloading will know how important that is to maintaining our viable towns and

cities in the city of Toronto. That uploading is continuing in this budget.

I also want to mention that the investment in public health is continuing. Not enough is said about our community health centres in this Legislature. I know I have two of the finest health centres anywhere in my riding. I've got Baycrest hospital, which is one of the best hospitals for cognitive impairment, it's a retirement home etc. It's fantastic. I also have the Anne Johnston community health centre, where their mandate is the barrier-free mandate to make sure that people with mobility problems are given health care. They take care of people right across the city of Toronto with mobility problems. They now have two full-time nurse practitioners—they're fantastic—they have three doctors, they have podiatrists, they've got a dentistry office downstairs to provide dental care, all in the Anne Johnston health centre. Also, I have the Unison health centre, which was formerly called the Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre, in the western part of my riding, which does incredible work on diabetes, for instance.

These are critical, vital community assets that continue to be funded in this budget, and that is something I applaud the Minister of Finance for continuing to do.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: There's a lot that I could say that's negative about this budget, and certainly the negatives far outweigh the positives, but we're nearing the end of our debate for the day on Bill 173, the budget bill, so I thought I'd like to end it on a positive note and commend the government for coming forward, particularly with, as the member from Eglinton-Lawrence spoke about, committing money to improving mental health and addiction services in Ontario, particularly for children.

He mentioned some of the work that was being done—I believe it was Delisle Youth Services. That's happening across our province, but we certainly need to augment the support for children and youth particularly because there's a serious crisis that's going on with a lot of our children in our schools. There's a lot of good work that's being done, but they need to have the resources in order to be able to continue their good work.

I actually had on my desk today a report that's been done by the Thames Valley District School Board which is called *Understand Me: A Strategic Plan for Improving Mental Health and Supporting Students with Mental Health Problems* in the Thames Valley District School Board for 2010 to 2015. This is some really groundbreaking work that's being done in our schools, and I hope that some of the money that's being allocated through the budget to mental health programs and services will spend time looking at some of this, too, for early identification and early treatment for children and youth, in order to avoid some of the problems that we're seeing with youth later on.

There was also a very sad story in the newspaper today about the problems with suicide on some of our university campuses. Queen's University had a sym-

posium just this past weekend about the recent rash of suicides. We need to really spend time and energy on developing programs to prevent this needless loss of life, and that's what we're going to be looking for.

The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care did promise to produce a report on how the strategy is going to be developed by mid-May or thereabouts, so we're certainly going to be looking to that to make sure that the money is being spent where it's absolutely needed to support some of this great work that's being done.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to both speakers, the one from Peterborough and the one from Eglinton–Lawrence. In the two minutes, I only have time to comment on one, and that's the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. He is trying to state, in a roundabout way, that this budget somehow involves the building of public transit in Toronto. I will acknowledge that the government did put some money aside in previous budgets, then withdrew it and slowed down the time frame by some four years, did a number of things and then allowed some of the money to trickle forward. We all know that's true.

I am appalled, really, at why the government has caved in to the pressures of Rob Ford and his minions at city hall. I am appalled that the Premier continues to play that game.

One of the things that's being done is the whole wasteful plan of digging almost the entire Eglinton LRT, or Eglinton right-of-way system, wasting all of the money. Although it might be good for Eglinton—it might be good for the member's riding—it will ensure quite horribly that the people who live along the Finch corridor are not going to get what they require in terms of the LRT, and that the dirty diesel buses will continue along there. It will almost assuredly make it impossible for the Sheppard line to be built, save and except if some people—magically, out of a hat—come forward to fund that in a private sector donation. That almost assuredly is not going to happen.

What we have is this government that put forward money in good faith, albeit they withdrew some of it or held some of it back, playing a game that is not going to do for the city of Toronto what all the experts say that we need. It's a very sad day, not a good day, as the member has described.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I think the comments of the two speakers presented a good contrast. I think it speaks well of the budget. The member from Peterborough focused mainly on ideas and issues contained within the budget that would impact on the rural community. The member from Eglinton–Lawrence focused primarily on those issues that would impact on the urban setting, which I am more familiar with, obviously. But I'm developing and have developed over the years a huge appreciation for the rural community and for the agricultural community, knowing how important it is not

only to the lifestyle and to what ends up on my dining room table but also to the economy of this province.

I think, once again, this speaks to the balance that's contained in this budget. I think often enough, in an adversarial system, the opposition and the third party's job is to pick out the things that they don't agree with. It was refreshing to hear the member from Whitby–Oshawa speak of at least one issue that we do all agree with. I think that speaks highly of the individual but it also shows us what we're capable of in this place from time to time, when we do find an issue that overrides those partisan concerns and is worthy of support. I accept the constructive criticism that's coming from the other side. I know that people are listening to it. I also, from time to time, obviously, appreciate when people say that there are some good things in here.

I think there's a number of good things in here that we should concentrate on. I'm not suggesting for a minute that people in my riding and people in the province of Ontario aren't concerned with our ability to eliminate the deficit. I think once we turned our attention to doing the right things when times are really tough, we're starting to emerge now with very strong economic opportunities for this province, and people really want to see a plan in place that gets us back to those balanced budget days. I think it's achievable. I think the plan that is spelled out in here is a reasonable plan. But at the same time it's not a cut-and-burn, it's not a slashing budget. It's one that protects the public services and protects the interests of taxpayers.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's always a pleasure to take part in the debate on the budget bill of this government, and it's always somewhat disappointing to listen to the government try to sell this budget as something that's going to be good for Ontario.

This bill doesn't do anything to help a family that is suffering and trying to make ends meet, a family that has seen their electrical bills double—double—over the term of this government, families that have seen their taxes increase 70%—73% overall—where this economy has only expanded by 9% or 10%. All taxes, whether it be corporate taxes—any kind of tax that the government gets, one way or another, comes out of the consumer's pocket. If you take it out of the corporate sector of our province or our small businesses—those small businesses do business with Ontario consumers. One way or another it trickles down and the Ontario consumer, the taxpayer, ends up paying all of those taxes. This government has seen fit to increase those taxes in such a disproportionate amount.

Watching the tax revenues of this government increase 73% while the economy of this province only increased by 10%, it's far and away out of all proportion to what Ontario can afford, and we've seen the results. We've seen the only job increases—the government is always proud to talk about job creation, but over 50% of that job creation that you're talking about is in the public sector.

There's no such thing as a bad job, but the public sector has to be paid for with tax dollars.

This government has done Ontarians a disservice with this budget.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Eglinton–Lawrence has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Mike Colle: I just want to say that I certainly see the divide in the Conservative Party there. I think I'm with the member from Whitby–Oshawa, who says certainly there's a time for debate and taking potshots, but let's remember: Families really need help when it comes to dealing with mental health issues.

You can talk about tax cuts and trickle-down economics, but the reality of the fact is, when families are desperate, they don't know where to turn. They've been to our offices; they come for help, and you tell them, "Well, we gave you a tax cut." I'd rather tell them I gave them some help for their mental health challenges, for their children and their school. I would take that choice any time. Never mind telling them about trickle-down economics. Tell that to a mother who's got a child who needs some help with their mental health issues—

Interjection: Or a farmer who can't hold on to his farm.

Mr. Mike Colle: —or a farmer who can't hold on to his farm.

The main thing is, I just want—if I had time to engage my colleague from East York here about transit. I don't dismiss some of the criticism or commentary. It's all very, very relevant, what he said about whether we tunnel or we don't tunnel. All I know is, being a former TTC chair, one thing I'll tell you is that the worst enemy of public transit in Toronto has been prolonged, nauseating, useless debate and navel-gazing. We should have been building, and we should have kept building. Our biggest mistake is when we stop building, because when we stop building, we basically lose momentum, the costs escalate and congestion continues.

I've talked to so many experts over the years. I'm still talking to people who know a lot—Dick Soberman, Ed Levy. Everybody's got a very valid point, but all I know is that—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): It now being past 6 o'clock, I declare that this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1802.

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 12 April 2011

Mardi 12 avril 2011

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 12 April 2011

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 12 avril 2011

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Jewish prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HEALTH PROTECTION AND PROMOTION AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION ET LA PROMOTION DE LA SANTÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 6, 2011, on the motion for third reading of Bill 141, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act / Projet de loi 141, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Ms. Smith has moved third reading of Bill 141. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard a no.

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This vote will be deferred until the conclusion of question period.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Orders of the day?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: We have no further business this morning.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 10:30 a.m. this morning.

The House recessed from 0903 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm absolutely delighted to introduce to the House this year's Girls in Government from Parkdale-High Park, from the schools of St. Pius X and Swansea Public. We've got Jennifer Bucci, Alicia Bialczyk, Maxine Pichler, Joyce Costa, Justina Ha, Bianca Harvey, Jenna Yuen, Charlie Creatura, Hannah

Azaria, Naseem Shaikh, Skye Macneil, Eden Hailu, Savahna Idris, Emily Henderson, and their school staff, Ms. Atkinson and Ms. Legacy. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I'm really proud to introduce—and the pages will be very interested in this—a page from 1999. His name is John David Doan. John, stand up.

John is from Sault Ste. Marie. He left here, went to high school, enrolled in university, and is now in his final year of medical school at Queen's University. He's doing a placement in the ICU unit at Mount Sinai Hospital.

John David, this whole Legislature is very, very proud of your accomplishments as a former page. He's also my nephew and my godson.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's my privilege to introduce Bob and Joyce Poland in the west members' gallery, grandparents of our page this session, Travis Poland. They are also my sister and brother-in-law.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to welcome the teachers and classmates of page Ciaran Thomas to Queen's Park. Ciaran is from my community of St. Paul's, and joining us today in the public gallery are Ciaran's teachers, Jan and Madeline, as well as his classmates from Howlett Academy. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I would like to introduce Amanda Robertson, who is in the gallery today. She's director of fundraising from Street Health Community Nursing Foundation here today. I would like to thank Street Health for their commitment to serving the homeless in my community. This is their 25th anniversary this year. They have had a tremendously positive impact on the lives of so many of my constituents. If you could, please join me in welcoming Amanda today.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I'm really happy to introduce to you a very famous TV producer. It's the TV Viet Tien producer Mr. Viet Tien Nguyen, and his assistant Mr. Tang. They're here to report on the calmness of our debates so people back home can see how democracy really works.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I trust the member from Davenport will be leading.

Further introductions?

I'd like to take this opportunity to ask all members to join me in welcoming a good friend of mine, Dr. Bob Warnock, in the Speaker's gallery. Bob is a chiropractor in the riding of Elgin-Middlesex-London, in the town of Aylmer, in the Speaker's gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park today, Bob.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On Thursday, March 31, the member from Welland, Mr. Kormos—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order—raised a point of order concerning standing order 23(f), which states:

“In debate, a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she:....

“(f) Reflects upon any previous vote of the House unless it is the member’s intention to move that it be rescinded.”

In his point of order, the member took issue with what is, in fact, quite a common occurrence in this chamber: reference by one member to a previous vote by another member, or another party. The member contended that standing order 23(f) should be interpreted as representing a prohibition against such references. The House leader of the official opposition, Mr. Yakabuski, supported this proposition and later renewed the same point of order when he complained about an oral question on Thursday, April 7, which again made reference to a previous vote in the House. I reserved my ruling and am now prepared to deliver it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members, it would be important to listen to this.

What gives rise to the opposition House leaders’ objections is when members of the government taunt the opposition with statements like, “You voted against giving seniors that tax credit,” or, “You voted against that support program for farmers.”

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): This is a statement for all members.

The nuance here is that these kinds of measures have been included in a bill which may contain a broad array of measures that, when voted upon, demand a single decision from every member, not a separate decision on each of its parts. Had they been able to vote separately on each part, members might well have voted in favour of that metaphorical seniors’ tax credit or farmers’ support program.

Preparing this ruling has caused me some degree of difficulty, because I do have to profess some sympathy for the opposition House leaders’ point. I don’t much like this when it happens, either. It almost always provokes disorder, to the extent that the practice has now given rise to this point of order. But what is the purpose of standing order 23(f)?

The rule is designed to protect the integrity of the collective decisions of the House. The process of a decision duly and properly made, whether by a majority or unanimously, has to be shielded from criticism or disparagement. Otherwise, the authority and legitimacy of the assembly itself and the legislative process is drawn into question. Thus, it is out of order to reproach the House as a whole or to scornfully criticize it for one of its deci-

sions, for to do so would impugn the reputation of this House.

The standing order anticipates that the House may have mistakenly decided a matter: Perhaps different or additional information emerges that might have affected the decision, or there was a significant procedural irregularity when the vote was taken, or the House cannot agree with the side that the Speaker chose when breaking a tie with his casting vote. In such decisions, reflecting on the vote is necessary in order to justify a motion that it be rescinded.

The point of order before me focused on criticism by one side of the House of the votes by the other side—or one of the parties, or of another individual member. As I have noted, standing order 23(f) works to preserve the integrity of the collective decisions of the House, not to forbid ever referring to how an individual member voted on any given matter before the House. A member’s voting history is what it is. It is on the public record, available for all to see, and it stands on its own.

It is instructive to note that research into this question was not successful in finding a single instance of this standing order ever being exercised to prevent a member from referring to another member’s vote. Indeed, the very common and longstanding practice to the contrary belies that position.

Even setting aside the procedural realities of the House, though, I am still left to address the practicality and reasonableness of the requested remedy to this grievance; that is, a prohibition against referring to previous votes by another member. I think such a limit would very quickly prove to be unenforceable and regularly offended. How can it be reasonable that it would be perpetually off limits ever to mention how another member voted on issues in the past? Surely no one genuinely expects the Speaker to shield an individual member, or certain members, or one of the parties in the House from attention to or comment about their vote on any matter. This happens all the time, and I see it as a natural part of the political process of which this place is the heart. It has simply never been a part of our culture that making an observation about a member’s voting record has ever been out of order.

For all the reasons I’ve just given, I cannot find that standing order 23(f) works to exclude the types of references complained about in the point of order.

1040

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTERS’ EXPENSES

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Minister of Government Services. Yesterday, Premier McGuinty began the day with an astonishing admission that he’s breaking his own expense disclosure rules. In fact, he and four other ministers have not filed a single expense on-

line since April 2010, when it began. By midday, you, Minister, sent out a memo trying to justify the process as being “successful so far,” but at the end of the day, the Premier accepted that he got caught. He backtracked and said he would stop hiding his expenses under the names of others in his office. Effectively, they had three different positions in one day. So who was wrong: the Premier in the morning, you in the afternoon, the Premier at night, or all three?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: To the Acting Premier and Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I have before me—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will come to order. Stop the clock.

Acting Premier?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I have with me a ministerial expense claim for the Integrity Commissioner's office. It's form—

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm not going to hear the point of order. I know that the Speaker should not anticipate, but he's going to question the referral to another minister, and that is allowed to be done within the chamber.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It's form 7540-2059, which is created—this is an interesting piece of legislation; the opposition and House will remember—by the Cabinet Ministers' and Opposition Leaders' Expenses Review and Accountability Act, 2002. This was created because the leader's former colleague—one of them—had expensed \$150,000 in hotel bills. Another one had expensed \$1,200 a night for drinks and wings at bars. They rushed this legislation through. We're using your forms. We're reporting according to the law that your government brought forward. This government has cleaned up the awful mess of expenditures that were left by that party of entitlement, who abused taxpayers' money at every opportunity they had.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I've got one word for the minister: eHealth, the biggest boondoggle in the history of the province, which went into the pockets of your Liberal friends.

Sadly, the minister, the so-called integrity czar, refuses to answer basic questions about a memo that the integrity czar sent out. Who's running the ship over there? Why are you getting paid if you won't answer questions about a memo that you sent out? Come on.

Three different positions in one day; the Premier got caught trying to hide his expenses under the name of his staff, and it appears to be rubbing off on his ministers, because there are four other ministers who haven't filed a single expense and have tried to hide them under their staff's names. If this guy is not responsible for integrity in government, I don't know who is. Why do you keep blaming everybody else for your own problems in hiding your own expenses?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The one thing that party has no comprehension of is integrity in government. Let us just review the record.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Leader of the Opposition took a trip: 140 days between April 1 and August 23, 2001. He and his staff racked up \$23,633 in expenses. Let me review with you what some of those expenses are.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will please come to order. Stop the clock.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: C'mon, Timmy, ask your seatmate how many—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Economic Development.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Sandra, you can ask questions in the fall.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Renfrew. Member from Nepean—Carleton. Minister of Consumer Services. Minister of Transport. Member from Essex.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Among those expenses by the Leader of the Opposition when he served in government were plants, gum, doughnuts and napkins.

This government has brought a level of accountability to ministerial expenses that was absent under that government. This government and the members of its ministry are in compliance with all the rules and regulations around full disclosure, and finally, everything we file is subject to freedom of information. We're about—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, come on. Your Premier got caught breaking his own rules yesterday. The Premier had one position in the morning; he had another position at night. Your integrity czar has been all over the place, except where he should be: answering questions here in the Ontario Legislature.

I don't know where you're coming from, Minister. You say you complied. You haven't posted a single expense since June 2010. You're trying to hide yours as well.

Minister, why don't you come clean? Stop blaming the Integrity Commissioner. Stop blaming everybody else. Point the finger squarely at your chest and your Premier's. Why were you breaking your own law when it came to publicly filing your expenses in our province?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: If the Leader of the Opposition were to fill out one of these forms today, like what he filled out to expense his chicken McNuggets, he would know that it goes through a variety of scrutiny. It's looked at by the Integrity Commissioner. The rules are fully followed. There's—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Lanark and the member from Nepean will please come to order. Member from Hamilton East. Member from Dufferin.

Minister?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Lisa and Tim eat at Jack Astor's.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: There have been trips to Jack Astor's by members of that caucus; \$92 for nachos.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Nachos?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Nachos.

This government has brought openness, integrity and accountability that was absent under the Conservative government. The people of Ontario don't want to go back to that culture of entitlement. They'll stand behind us. The integrity of the Premier and his government is second to none.

MINISTERS' EXPENSES

Mr. Tim Hudak: Nobody believes that anymore, Minister, and that's what I want to see changed in our province. I'm going to invoke the faint hope that the Minister of Government Services will actually answer a question that has to do with his portfolio. So let me try again.

To the integrity czar, the Minister of Government Services: Premier McGuinty has changed. He'll say anything to get re-elected. He used to say that anyone who failed to follow his expense claim rules would be "visited with the full consequences of their failings." The Premier broke his own rules. Four ministers haven't posted since April 2010. So when the Premier says "the full consequences of their failings," what does that mean in McGuinty-speak—a slap on the wrist, a loud tsk-tsk or a wink and a nod from the so-called integrity czar?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Lanark. The member from Durham, who's not in his seat—stop the clock. The member from Peterborough as well. The member from Halton. Minister of Community Safety. So much for the member from Davenport's wish.

Minister?

1050

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me outline what the procedure is for posting these expenses so it's clear to the House. Expenses must be submitted by the ministers, the PAs and the political staff in the 22 largest agencies. They are reviewed by the Integrity Commissioner, and once the Integrity Commissioner has reviewed them they are sent to Ontario Shared Services for posting. Expenses have been posted approximately every month since April 2010. If some expenses are not up yet, it is likely that—

Interjection.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Do you want to answer this question rather than me?

The Integrity Commissioner is still reviewing them or they are in the queue to be posted. Sometimes there's a

backlog with the Integrity Commissioner and it takes time to post the expenses.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters) Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The minister asked if he could refer the question to the member for Renfrew in the opposition. You referred it to pretty well everybody else, so I wouldn't be surprised if you tried it.

Minister, you yourself have broken your expense filing rules. You are one of the seven ministers, like the finance minister, who hasn't filed a single expense since June 1, 2010. The Premier himself broke the rules and at least admitted that yesterday and said he's going to change. Instead of coming clean with Ontario families, you sent out junior staffers to defend your own failure to follow your own rules.

Minister, I'll ask you: How can we trust you to run this expense disclosure system when you yourself are breaking the rules?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Here is a list—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will please—stop the clock.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: You're mixing your metaphors.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The English lessons can take place outside the chamber, and I certainly encourage the member from Welland and the Minister of Community Safety to perhaps go visit the pages' school down in the basement.

Minister?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I think the Leader of the Opposition needs to maybe start looking himself, because my expenses are on the website. Here's a list of three expenses that are right on the website. So maybe he should start looking at it.

Here is the difference between our party and their party: I met with the Leader of the Opposition and asked him to post his expenses. You know what they did? Rather than actually linking the website on which they post their expenses, they created a separate website that nobody can find to see if their expenses are posted or not. They have a secret website, and they don't want the people of Ontario to see if their expenses are posted on the website or not. Why is your website not linked to your main website? Why are you hiding these from the people?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier McGuinty said that if you fail to follow the rules, there will be consequences, so let me ask about what those consequences are going to be. More than half of cabinet have not posted a single expense since June 2010. As a result, agencies are following suit. Fully 14 of the 22 agencies that this regulates have similarly broken the rules—more than half.

Minister, this was brought to your attention in October 2010. You have had six months to do something about it, and all you put out was a memo to excuse everyone who's breaking the law.

Minister, you've had six months. If the Premier breaks the rules and you break the rules, how can we actually trust you to run the system and why should the agencies follow suit?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: This reminds me of a saying that says that people in glass houses shouldn't throw stones at others.

Let me just read this from the St. Catharines Standard of December 6. This is not what I said but what the St. Catharines Standard on December 6, 2002, said: "While Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Tim Hudak spent your tax money to go to a conference in Las Vegas with vice-presidential candidate Dick Cheney."

This is what the Welland Tribune, on October 4, 2002, said: "Tourism Minister Tim Hudak went on a province-wide junket in the summer of 2001. In 145 days between April 1 and August 23, 2001"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. Tonight—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Education. Member from Simcoe North.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Renfrew.

As I've reminded members before, we do have a rotation in this chamber when it comes to question period. Right now, that rotation has moved to the third party, and I would ask members, particularly of the official opposition, to allow the leader of the third party to put her questions.

Please continue.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. Tonight is federal debate night in Canada. Those tuning in will see the federal leaders offer vastly different opinions on corporate taxes. They'll see that when it comes to corporate tax cuts, the Prime Minister and the Premier of Ontario are like two peas in a pod, yet study after study proves that these corporate tax giveaways don't result in increased business investments or job creation. When will the McGuinty government finally chart a different course and abandon the corporate tax giveaway policies of Stephen Harper?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Our government brought forward a comprehensive tax plan for jobs and growth. I am proud that we were able to reduce personal taxes. The leader of the third party earlier this morning tweeted that we're giving oil companies tax cuts. What she doesn't realize is, they don't headquarter here or pay their corporate taxes here.

What we wanted to do was say to the forestry sector and the auto sector, which employ tens of thousands of Ontarians, that, "You can compete on an equal footing with those other corporations, so that we would have more jobs in Ontario."

The New Democrats want to create jobs in Alberta. They want to create jobs in Michigan. They want to create jobs anywhere but Ontario. Our plan is the right plan for Ontario. Ontario's part of a strong—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East.

Mr. Paul Miller: What are you doing for the steelworkers in Hamilton and Sudbury?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): You can't even hear me.

Mr. Paul Miller: I couldn't hear you; sorry.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): He couldn't hear you because of yourself.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: You know what? They may be inconvenient, but here are some facts for the minister: In 2000, the combined provincial-federal corporate tax rate was 42%. A decade later, the combined rate is now 28% and soon will fall to 25% because of the Harper Conservative-McGuinty Liberal corporate tax giveaways. During the exact same period, business investment in plant and machinery has fallen from 7.7% of GDP to 5.5%. During tonight's debate, it will be Stephen Harper alone defending corporate tax cuts.

When federal Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff turns to Harper and tells him that corporate tax giveaways don't create jobs, who is this minister going to be cheering for?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'd like to know what the leader of the third party said to Mr. Layton when he endorsed the HST in Nova Scotia.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Fifteen per cent—

Hon. Dwight Duncan: A 15% HST. Let me tell you what Mr. Layton had to say about all of this. He says, "The thing about what happened here under Darrell Dexter was, there was a whole program"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Member from Renfrew. Stop the clock.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Here's what Jack Layton had to say: "The thing about what happened here under Darrell Dexter was, there was a whole program of rebates and specific reductions." Ours are bigger than Nova Scotia's: interesting. He endorsed it after the NDP in Nova Scotia raised the HST by two points. That leader and her party wanted to raise the provincial sales tax by 1%.

We cut taxes for jobs in Ontario: jobs for steelworkers, jobs for auto workers, jobs for forestry—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Excuse me?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Why, did you say something? You have a guilty look on your face.

Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Perhaps we should take this opportunity to get back to the point. The mountain of evidence proving the folly of corporate tax giveaways continues to grow. Statistics Canada data show that corporate tax giveaways don't create jobs. A recent study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives found the exact same thing, yet the McGuinty government persists.

When it comes to corporate tax policy in this province, why is the government listening to Stephen Harper and Jim Flaherty while ignoring virtually everyone else?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The point is jobs. The point is to make sure that Ontario workers have an opportunity to work again in the auto sector, in the forestry sector, in all of the important sectors of this economy.

The leader of the third party wants to have it both ways. She cannot justify her position on the HST versus that of Jack Layton. You can't have it both ways. So if you support Jack Layton's tax policy, does that mean you support a 2% increase in the HST? That has to be what it is.

This government, this party, will stand up for auto workers to get them work. It will stand up for steelworkers to get them work. It will stand up for forestry workers to get them work instead of selling them out to low-tax jurisdictions where they don't have a chance to compete. It's about a stronger economy—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

GASOLINE PRICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Acting Premier. Ontario drivers are angry about gas price rip-offs. Some drivers in Thunder Bay today are paying \$1.34; in Timmins, \$1.37. A CIBC study released yesterday shows that gasoline prices are up by about 25% since 2010. The increase could cost the average Ontario household as much as \$950 more this year alone.

In every eastern Canadian province but Ontario, governments have moved to stop these kinds of rip-offs by regulating the price of gasoline. Why does this government continue to take the side of oil companies and refuse to protect the interests of Ontario residents?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Ontario consumers recognize the problem in the world oil supply. They also recognize that this is happening right across the country, right around the world. They also recognize that in those provinces where these so-called fixes have been brought in, not only have they not lowered prices, they've raised prices.

It is important that we continue to build a better economy by making investments in education and health care. It is important that we not lose sight of those broader issues as we build a better economy and build better jobs for our children. I would invite the leader of the third party to try to understand what is happening in the world

economy today. If she did, she'd realize just how empty her rhetoric really is.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The CIBC study shows that this continued gas price rip-off means that Ontarians are likely to spend less on things like sporting goods, clothing, personal care products and a whole other list of everyday items. Things are even worse because of the HST now levied at the pumps.

New Democrats believe that it's time that the Ontario government finally stood up to the oil companies and stopped these gas price rip-offs. Will this government regulate the price of gas or is Ontario going to continue to be the only province in eastern Canada where oil companies can just keep on ripping off motorists?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The leader of the third party knows full well that the federal government has responsibility for that and we can't regulate it. That is well known.

I don't disagree with what the CIBC report finds. Rising gasoline prices do in fact impact the economy. Unfortunately, this Legislature, and certainly the leader of the third party, can't control circumstances in Libya and can't control circumstances in any other part of the world. It is a world price. We pay the world price, and that is our reality. What we can do is build prudence into our budget; we can build reserves to accommodate the challenges that are going to happen.

Interestingly enough, the principal gasoline tax revenues actually decline when the prices go up. Not only that, but because we give two cents of that to municipalities, it helps fund public transit. We don't want to cut public transit; we want to build a better future for Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I wish the minister would pay attention to the circumstances of Ontario drivers these days. That's a circumstance he needs to put his mind to.

More than four years ago, a legislative committee voted unanimously—that means every party in this House on that committee—to investigate precisely these sorts of rip-offs and explore the possibility of a made-in-Ontario gas price regulation regime. But this government stopped the committee in its tracks and refused to allow it to conduct even one single public hearing. Ontarians are tired of having their pocketbooks picked by oil companies that exploit world tensions to fatten their own bottom line.

When is this government going to finally take the side of Ontario drivers and stop the continued price gouging by oil companies?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think Ontario consumers can see through empty rhetoric that is steeped in no substance whatsoever. The leader of the third party would have us believe that this Legislature can affect the price of gasoline. Ontario consumers are too smart for that. They can see through the emptiness of that. They've heard this

from all three parties over the years—all kinds of mindless grandstanding by the NDP on this issue.

The reality is this: We pay a world price for gasoline. We take certain steps, through a number of tax relief mechanisms, to ensure that Ontarians are shielded somewhat from that. That is our reality. The leader of the third party's tired old rhetoric is not going to get anywhere. The people of this province can see right through her.

MINISTERS' EXPENSES

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Infrastructure: The Minister of Health Promotion posted her expenses, and they're current to December 2010. If the Minister of Health Promotion can comply with the law and post her expenses online and on time, why did the Minister of Infrastructure ignore the rules and not do so likewise?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We established a process which requires the members and their staff to file their expenses with the Integrity Commissioner by a fixed date. That has been complied with. What has happened is, the Integrity Commissioner has not finished working on these files. When she provides the information, we can then file them.

That is the process. It is a process which is much better than any process they had when they were in government, and we have complied. It is an irresponsible question. We have complied with all the requirements of expenses, and we will continue to do so. When we receive the information from the Integrity Commissioner, they will be posted on our website.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: Just to be clear, Minister, it is now the fault of the Integrity Commissioner that the minister's expenses are not posted on time, as required?

Yesterday, we caught the Premier breaking the expense disclosure rules. Today it's the minister, but he chooses to blame the Integrity Commissioner. I would ask the minister this: Is it that he in fact is simply ignoring the requirement to post on time, or is there something about those expenses that he has intentionally not disclosed? Which is it?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I answered that question in the main question.

I will answer the supplementary this way, and that is, we've been asking the party opposite where they posted their expenses. They promised to post in February last year. Almost a year later, they finally posted them on a secret website, Ontariopleader.ca. There is no link to the secret website from the main PC Party website. The secret site is more or less impossible to find with search engines like Google. There was no announcement when the expenses went up on the secret site.

They are making it so hard—

Interjections.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Nepean; the member from Lanark.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Minister of Community Safety, Minister of Agriculture. New question.

NUCLEAR SAFETY

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. As a result of the ongoing Fukushima nuclear crisis, the US Environmental Protection Agency is now reporting increased levels of radioactive iodine and calcium in milk, drinking water and rain water in cities across the United States. Radioactive iodine levels in milk in Los Angeles and Phoenix are at or above maximum acceptable levels, and in Vermont the milk is at two thirds the maximum level.

What I'd like to know is: Is the radiation level in the milk that we drink here in Ontario being tested, and are those results accessible?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I think it's really important, when we deal with issues regarding the tragedy in Japan, that we deal with those issues very sensitively. Indeed, I think the last thing any member of this Legislature would want to do would be to put out information that might have the effect of fearmongering to the public on these kinds of issues.

We here in Ontario have a nuclear system and a nuclear program that is at or above all international standards. The people of this province can be absolutely assured that indeed, our nuclear system here in Ontario is safe, it's secure and it meets all international safety standards. Again, the last thing we would want to do is to suggest to our constituents that the facts are—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to go back to the Minister of Health, because Ontarians are concerned about the health risk of radiation coming from Japan and they want full information about the radioactivity in the air that we breathe, in the food that we eat and in the water and the milk that we drink; the information about how to protect our health. This is about the health of Ontarians.

What will the Minister of Health do to ensure—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: That's irresponsible.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Guelph, it is not for you to be judging whether a question is responsible or not.

I just remind all members that the issues that we deal with in this chamber are of importance to the people of Ontario. This question that is being asked is of importance to the member from Nickel Belt. I would just ask that that same respect be shown on the other side in answering the question.

Please continue.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was saying: This is about the health of Ontarians, and having information is the best way to empower people to take

responsibility for their own health. If you don't have information, then people make it up. So what I want to ask is: Will the Minister of Health—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: It's simple. Yes or no?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Yes, you make it up.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Research and Innovation, Minister of Municipal Affairs, comments like that are not helpful for maintaining good order and decorum in this House.

Mr. John Yakabuski: We're hearing more and more of them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Renfrew, it's not helpful either, because some of those comments come from both sides as well at times.

Please continue.

M^{me} France G  linas: The radiation levels are accessible to the people in the US. I was on their website. You click and you can see it all. It's clear and transparent. When will the Minister of Health ensure that radiation levels in milk, drinking water, rainwater, in the air, everywhere in Ontario, are monitored and posted?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The Minister of Agriculture is very keen to respond to this.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I am very keen to respond to this. I want to reinforce that food safety is our first priority.

Specifically, the question that was asked is directly toward milk. I want to remind all the members of why we're such strong supporters of the supply-managed sector. Milk is contained within the supply-managed sector, and I want to assure that under Ontario's Health Protection and Promotion Act it is illegal to deliver, distribute, sell or offer for sale milk that has not been pasteurized or sterilized in a plant that is licensed under the Milk Act. I'm very pleased to report to the House that the supply-managed sector, which milk falls within—we can absolutely give assurances that the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Ted McMeekin: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Over the last several months, the member opposite from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has criticized the McGuinty government for not doing enough for the people of Hamilton: not enough jobs, not enough for the economy, not enough, never enough—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will come to order. Member from Oxford. Member from Durham, who's not in his seat.

Please continue.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Never, ever enough, he says.

I, for one, a representative of many constituents who are employed by businesses in the city of Hamilton and the surrounding area, am very concerned about this kind of negativity and want to hear from you, Minister, what you have to say about this. Minister, what exactly has the McGuinty government done to help families in the Hamilton area, and what is the government doing to create jobs in our great city?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Let me just say this: I'm delighted to speak to this. The member from Hamilton raises very, very important questions. It is very disturbing to hear the negativity that comes constantly from that side of the House as it relates to the great region of Hamilton. We have worked diligently with the city of Hamilton, with the economic development commission, to search for every opportunity.

Arcelor Dofasco is one perfect example where our government partnered with this company for their investment of \$153 million, which is securing hundreds of jobs in the Hamilton area. We're proud of the steel industry, proud of the history of Hamilton and what a significant player they are in the whole of the manufacturing sector in Ontario.

We, on this side of the House, are proud of the inroads we're making to turn the corner of the recession, especially in the region of Hamilton.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I very much appreciate that answer, and I want to thank the minister for it. It's comforting to know that the economic recovery across Ontario includes all parts of this great province, and especially my beloved city of Hamilton.

I'm particularly interested in Max Aicher's plans for economic development in Hamilton. I understand this is a successful international firm that has decided to open up shop in Hamilton.

I'd also like to ask the minister to tell the House what benefits the people of Hamilton can expect to gain from this particular business, and I hope the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek listens to the answer.

1120

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I'm delighted to be able to speak about Max Aicher, a company that we took the time to meet when we were on a trip in Europe, sitting down with a potential investor who, in the end, invested \$106 million in Ontario, specifically in Hamilton, re-opening a steel plant from the US Steel days, re-employing people who used to work at US Steel and are now working for Max Aicher—hundreds of jobs thanks to the investment by Max Aicher, a company that we invited to come into Ontario, that we're delighted to have. They have a great international reputation in the steel business. We're delighted to have them. Max Aicher himself has since made several trips to Ontario and is delighted with our Hamilton operation, as the Ontario government is delighted to partner with a great company like Max Aicher.

I'm only sad to say that the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

MINISTERS' EXPENSES

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, you managed to post your expenses up until December 2010 last year. You also sit close to the Minister of Tourism, who didn't post a single expense last year—not even for the trip to China he took with Premier McGuinty.

What's your secret for obeying the law, and why haven't you shared it with your cabinet colleagues?

Hon. John Milloy: I am very pleased that I have been able to get out across this province and talk about the great things that this government has done in terms of post-secondary education. It was only a few weeks ago that I visited the riding of Sarnia, where I talked about the tremendous investments that have been made in Lambton College. I was able to attend a Second Career graduation ceremony, where we talked about the literally hundreds and hundreds of laid-off individuals who have been helped through Second Career and who have received support from the government of Ontario, from a program that that opposition party stood up and derided, made fun of and did not support.

I talked about the great investments in terms of post-secondary education that that member and his party voted against. I talked about the way that we are—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Robert Bailey: My supplementary is back to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. That sounded like a rendition of Gulliver's Travels.

Minister, your colleague the Minister of Tourism isn't the only one who would benefit from your advice on how to comply with the law and to keep up with expense disclosure laws. You managed to file your expenses—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I withdraw. You don't even have to ask me.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stand and withdraw.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please continue.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Speaker; it's kind of you.

Minister, you managed to file your expenses even when you also carried the research and innovation portfolio. This current minister hasn't posted a single expense. Did you take all the forms from the office, or is blaming the Integrity Commissioner just self-serving?

Hon. John Milloy: I'm a little shocked that the member would refer to a trip that I took to Sarnia to talk about the great investments made by this government—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Well, you could hear the answer, member from Sarnia, if your caucus would tone it down a little bit and allow you to hear that answer.

Minister?

Hon. John Milloy: I'm a little shocked that the member would refer to a trip that I took to his riding as Gulliver's Travels, but since the member has stood up and asked me to comment on my colleagues, perhaps he'd like to talk about some of his colleagues when they were government, cabinet ministers who expensed Timbits; cabinet ministers, such as the Leader of the Opposition, who expensed their trip to Las Vegas and Chicken McNuggets, who made a mockery of the expense system.

We brought a level of transparency to it. Our—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Minister, recently you launched the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario. It's interesting to see that section 8.2 says, "An Engaged and Informed Population."

"8.2.1 The province will work to implement the policies of this plan in a manner that is responsive to northern Ontario" by "seeking out the views and aspirations of northern Ontario residents and businesses" and "using a variety of consultation mechanisms," such as public meetings.

How can you go forward with Bill 151, a bill that will affect the forest industry for years to come, and not adequately consult the north by allowing that committee to travel up north?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: We're very pleased that Bill 151, modernizing the forest tenure system, is moving forward. As the member knows well, we had two different, separate consultations leading up to the introduction of the legislation where we consulted very closely with northerners. We've continued that process as we lead up to the public hearings.

I am very pleased indeed that we've had strong representation from northern Ontario at the hearings that started yesterday and some very strong support. The consultation process has been extensive, and it is continuing.

In fact, I'm very pleased about the fact that we've been working with the forest sector in particular—up to last week—recognizing that the key to this is for us to get this legislation right. We are very pleased that the public hearings will give us an opportunity to bring forward some positive amendments that indeed will improve—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, it's called the growth plan. In the centre of the growth plan is the idea that the government will consult northerners when it comes to decisions that affect them. You're about to pass Bill 151

in a matter of weeks. You're not travelling that bill to northern Ontario; you're doing it down here at Queen's Park, where northerners don't have the ability to participate.

So I ask you again: How can you stand behind Bill 151 and, more importantly, how can you stand behind the growth plan when you don't follow what you set out there, which is consultation with northerners?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: We are in the midst of extensive consultations related to Bill 151. We had two different levels leading up to the introduction of the draft proposal, and we went back out on the road and consulted all across the north. And, may I say, not just northern Ontario; there are many other communities in Ontario with, obviously, forestry being an important part of their economy. So indeed, that consultation process has taken place.

I am delighted that we've had strong northern consultations coming forward to Queen's Park. We opened it up to video conferencing. In fact, Dennis Rounsville, from Tembec, appeared yesterday. He thanked us for the convenience of being able to conference in and not having to travel to be at the committee. We'll continue the consultations. We'll come up with a better piece of legislation—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have a question for the Attorney General. Sunday marked the launch of National Victims of Crime Awareness Week. The theme this year is Many Voices, Many Paths.

We fully recognize that no two victims are the same and each person works through the aftermath of the victimization in different ways. I know our government has played a significant role in addressing the diverse needs of victims. We have put numerous supports in place to help victims of crime overcome the impact of these horrific incidents.

While nothing can take away the terrible pain of those who have suffered from crime, can the Attorney General, who has taken a personal interest in this, tell the House what our government is doing to make sure that victims of crime all across Ontario are supported when they need help most? One, in the immediate aftermath of crime—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member from Davenport raises a very important point at the beginning of victims' week. This week and every week we want to make sure that victims and their families have the supports they need at times of crisis and throughout the criminal justice process.

From the time we became the government we've invested almost three quarters of a billion dollars in victims' services and supports; this year alone, \$120 million, twice what the previous government invested in their last

year. What does that pay for? It pays for the victim crisis assistance and referral services 24 hours a day, immediately, on a crime being committed; the victim/witness assistance service; the quick response service to put cash in victims' pockets when they need it most; and the human trafficking initiative, just to mention a few—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

1130

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: There are organizations in my riding of Davenport and throughout Ontario that operate through the dedication and hard work of professionals, volunteers and community workers to provide victims of crime and their families with the supports and services they need to overcome trauma and help put their lives back together.

Front-line workers know that the court process is an inherently stressful time for victims, coming face to face with those accused in a case and reliving often horrific experiences. Of course, this can once more tear open old scars.

In the past, the justice system would rarely interact with victims beyond direct contact with them at the crime scene and again on the witness stand. Can the Attorney General tell this House and front-line victims' service providers—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member is right. Throughout his experience, he's seen the development of these services: the victim/witness assistance program, helping victims and their families in court, just to name one.

But he's also been able to identify a few gaps. We just launched a fund, the vulnerable victims and family fund, to address some of those gaps. For example, the families of homicide victims travelling to court: This fund will help them and support them financially so they can get to those court appearances; victims who require some additional interpretation service, not just to testify but to follow the proceedings.

We want to make sure that victims and their families are as involved as they wish to be throughout the court process and get the support they need. Thanks to the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

MINISTERS' EXPENSES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Minister of Research and Innovation. The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities was the former Minister of Research and Innovation. He posted his expenses online, and they are current to December 2010. If the former minister could comply with the law and post his expenses online, why do you refuse? Or did he, in fact, steal all the forms from the office?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's starting to sound like a Monty Python skit over there.

What was the Leader of the Opposition doing in Las Vegas with Dick Cheney? Was he getting hunting tips? I notice he got the fishing licence. Hopefully, the Vice-President didn't get the hunting licence. That's like the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills getting political advice from the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington or getting seasonal hunting advice from that member.

This party is hysterical. Not a single question on innovation or on productivity. In five years, not a single intelligent economic development question, because they don't get it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Hysterical, going rogue or unaccountable? We can't pick all three, but I'm certain one of them is exactly what you are—going rogue for sure today.

When he was caught bending the rules, Premier McGuinty's first impulse was to dodge and try to change the channel. He only backtracked when he got cornered.

Will you finally admit and take some responsibility, be accountable as a minister of the crown and admit that you have tried to fool Ontario families and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the member to withdraw that comment, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I withdraw.

Will you actually post your expenses and come clean with Ontario families?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I offered yesterday. If the member for Nepean-Carleton wants to write me a note, I'll send her—my expenses are all up to date. They've all been filed with the Integrity Commissioner. They're all making their way through the system.

Maybe you need better research staff. I don't know what it is. God knows, your nomination process is out of whack. You can't protect your own members.

Maybe you need to hire better research staff, because you get a lot of money from the taxpayers of Ontario. I would offer to take the member from Nepean-Carleton to dinner. Unlike her leader, I won't charge taxpayers 87 bucks; I'll pick up the tab. I'll go through with you, at my expense, my expense account.

Maybe you need to get better researchers and get them off their butts, working for—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Families in the Niagara region are frustrated with their health care system, for good reason. They've seen emergency rooms closed in Fort Erie and Port Colborne, health care services disappear and life-changing decisions being made without transparency or accountability.

Local governments are listening to the concerns of their constituents. Last month, the Niagara regional council approved a resolution calling for an independent in-

vestigation of the Niagara Health System, following on the footsteps of seven municipal resolutions. Why has the McGuinty government blocked this vital investigation?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As the member opposite knows, this afternoon I'm meeting with several community leaders from the Niagara area to better understand their concerns.

What I can tell you is that this is a government that is committed to improving health care for all Ontarians, and that includes people in the Niagara region.

Niagara's hospitals are a very important part of our health care system. Of course, it goes without saying that they are made stronger because local people care about what happens there and local people advocate for them.

I am absolutely looking forward to this afternoon's meeting. I want to hear what they have to say, and I want to talk about how we can continue to improve—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Today the mayors are meeting with the Minister of Health to talk about the Niagara Health System's possible investigation. This is not news to the Minister of Health. This issue has been raised by me and others in this House many times. She knows very well. She shouldn't be waiting to hear what they have to say; she should already know what's happening in the Niagara region and the frustration people are having there. So her nice little words about this lovely meeting don't really make much sense.

It's clear that the people of Niagara have lost faith in the Niagara Health System and that something needs to be done about that. Something needs to be done about that right away, to bring back their support for their Niagara Health System. Can the people of Niagara count on this minister to do the right thing and actually call the investigation?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: If the member opposite is suggesting that I not talk to anyone, I fundamentally disagree with that. We always learn when we sit down and talk to people. I'm looking forward to learning more this afternoon.

I can tell you that health care is measurably better in Niagara than it was when we took office. We've increased hospital funding by over 55%; that's more than \$113 million more on hospitals. We've also worked very hard to bring down wait times. The people in Niagara are benefiting from those investments. We've been able to cut 200 days off the wait time for hip replacement and 127 days off knee replacement.

We're building a wonderful new hospital in St. Catharines that will provide cancer care—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Khalil Ramal: My question is to the Minister of Government Services. Minister, my constituents are

asking how our government is finding savings within our government organization in an effort to cut expenditures while maintaining a high quality of service delivery.

I was pleased to see that there have been significant savings found across the government. I know that travel has been reduced, among many other expenses.

As you said before, “Every taxpayer dollar counts, particularly in these difficult economic times. It is more important than ever to ensure that we all take responsibility” to save money in our government.

Minister, can you explain to me and to the whole House and to my constituents your plan to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I want to thank the member from London—Fanshawe for asking this question.

Better use of technology and tighter rules on travel have reduced employee expenses by about \$30 million last year alone, and that is about a 24% reduction. Our government has saved more than 22,500 hours of travel time. It is expected that a further \$10 million will be saved this year in reduced travel expenses.

Webcasting and video conferencing technology have played a key role in reducing all these expenses. Let me just give you some examples: \$7.1 million in reduced accommodations; \$6.2 million in air travel; \$6.2 million in road travel; \$1.4 million in meal expenses; and \$9.1 million in other travel-related expenses.

We are doing everything possible to make sure that our expenses are managed better.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I want to thank the minister for working hard, on behalf of all of us in this House, to find savings in government services.

It's not just about saving. Another component to it is protecting our environment. Can the minister tell us, as a result of the saving and reducing all the papers and all the travelling, how it can impact the environment and what is the result of that?

1140

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: As the member said, it's not just reducing the travel expenses; it's also reducing paper and office equipment as well. That will save us about \$15.6 million over the next two years. That is being done by eliminating 15,000 printers and computer servers, saving about \$8 million a year; paper use reduced by 50%, saving about \$7 million; reduced fax machines, saving about \$640,000. Reducing the number of daily news packages by 96% will save about \$1.5 million. The reduction in our office equipment alone will save about 30.5 million kilowatt hours per year as well. That is enough energy to power about 2,700 homes.

MINISTERS' EXPENSES

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Why could the Minister of Health Promotion and the Minister of Training, College

and Universities post their monthly expenses up to December 2010 and you won't?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I certainly thank the member opposite for his question. However, I would appreciate at least one question on immigration from my critic someday.

I can tell you that I have submitted all my ministerial expenses. I'm glad that the member opposite has given me the opportunity to talk about what some of these travel expenses relate to. For example, this past October 8, I flew to Ottawa to meet with my federal counterpart, Jason Kenney, to demand that the federal government immediately begin negotiations on a Canada-Ontario immigration agreement to benefit newcomers. Because of meetings such as this one, Ottawa did, in fact, enter into negotiations with Ontario.

I urge the opposition to end their silence and stand—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm not sure Jason Kenney would know who the minister is. You should be more like the Minister of Health Promotion and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities instead of the Minister of Infrastructure or the Minister of Research and Innovation. Maybe the first two ministers could give you a lesson on how to fill out the forms on time. Why won't you admit that you're trying to fool Ontario families with your—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Withdraw the comment.

Mr. Steve Clark: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I find such comments pretty rich coming from the opposition. I should point out that the submission of ministerial expenses is an issue which is very important to this government and to all ministers, and it's something that I take very seriously. I think, however, it's quite telling that the immigration critic has not even taken the time to ask my ministry for a briefing on immigration matters, which is the level of attention he pays to that.

I'd ask the member opposite to take his job seriously, call his federal counterparts and demand a fair deal for Ontario and for Ontario's newcomers.

NUCLEAR SAFETY

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Our neighbours to the south have found radioactive iodine and cesium in their milk. They reported their findings publicly. This is the basis of health promotion: Give the people transparent access to the information they need so they can protect their health.

My question is very simple: Is the government testing for radiation levels in the milk, the drinking water and the rain water across Ontario, yes or no?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very happy to actually have a chance to answer this. I want to emphasize the importance of monitoring radioactivity and other health hazards. I will undertake to have a conversation with the chief medical officer of health. I will have a fuller understanding of exactly what it is we are doing, and I undertake to get back to the member opposite with that explanation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank the minister for her offer to follow up. I, too, am interested. As I said, the basis of a good health promotion initiative is to have the facts to make them accessible to the people of Ontario so we all know.

We encourage people to drink milk. It is good for you. But I would say that if there are reported levels of radiation that are happening in states like Vermont, then it is worth monitoring what is done in Ontario so we have a clear conscience. All I'm asking for is, please do the monitoring and make it available and accessible to the people of Ontario.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I appreciate the member opposite's willingness to give me a little bit of time to find out more about this. I look forward to learning more myself and to sharing that information.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question today is for the Minister of Government Services. Ontario families have a level of expectation of services they receive from our government. More than ever, Ontarians expect to receive high value for their government services and expect the service to be at par with the private sector.

I know that ServiceOntario in my community has been addressing a number of issues, such as long lines and wait times for core services, as well as issues like having to visit multiple locations for drivers' licences and health cards. Fixing it wasn't easy and didn't happen overnight. It took hard work and some thinking out of the box. It took a service revolution involving a number of initiatives to make it easier for individuals, families and businesses to access government information services.

Could the minister tell us what changes or improvements the minister is doing or referred to in his budget to make service delivery better for Peterborough families?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I am very proud of the changes we have made to improve the services that we deliver to all Ontarians. We actually have integrated our services; we have streamlined our services; we have modernized our services. Now we have 300 services, which consist of two thirds private and one third owned by the government. They deliver family-friendly services to all Ontarians. We have extended the hours. All of those services are available within 10 kilometres. We are not only just providing certain services, but actually we are taking all the services and providing them under one roof as well.

We have actually started measuring the wait times so that we can improve the services and even start providing more guarantees for the services that we provide, so that in case we don't deliver the services on time, the people can get their money refunded.

We are very, very proud of the services that we are providing to the people and the quality of services that we are providing these days.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

M^{me} France Gélinas: On a point of order: I was referring to radioactive cesium, but my colleague told me that I said "calcium." Just in case, I was talking about cesium, not calcium.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. That is a point of order. The member is allowed to correct his or her own record.

Mr. Jeff Leal: On a point of order: I'm trying to figure out this morning why the opposition never asked any questions on health care and education—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That is not a point of order, and that is not helpful in helping to maintain order and decorum in this chamber.

DEFERRED VOTES

HEALTH PROTECTION AND PROMOTION AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION ET LA PROMOTION DE LA SANTÉ

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 141, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act / Projet de loi 141, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 141, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1148 to 1150.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Ms. Smith has moved third reading of Bill 141. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Broten, Laurel C.

Gélinas, France
Gerretsen, John
Hampton, Howard
Hardeman, Ernie
Hoskins, Eric
Hoy, Pat
Hudak, Tim
Jaczek, Helena

Mitchell, Carol
Moridi, Reza
Munro, Julia
Murray, Glen R.
O'Toole, John
Oraziotti, David
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Phillips, Gerry

Brown, Michael A.
Caplan, David
Carroll, Aileen
Clark, Steve
Colle, Mike
Craitor, Kim
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dickson, Joe
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Flynn, Kevin Daniel

Jeffrey, Linda
Johnson, Rick
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Kormos, Peter
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
MacLeod, Lisa
Martiniuk, Gerry
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
Miller, Norm
Milloy, John

Prue, Michael
Pupatello, Sandra
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Savoline, Joyce
Smith, Monique
Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Yakabuski, John

ladies who were visiting today or the hundreds of thousands of students who visit this chamber on an annual basis. I'd just ask all members on both sides of the House to be conscious of that.

There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1155 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BROCKVILLE AND AREA YMCA

Mr. Steve Clark: Last night, the Brockville and Area YMCA held its annual volunteer appreciation dinner. I'm sorry I wasn't able to be there to give my personal thanks to those volunteers who are the broad shoulders this great organization is built upon.

Two special awards were handed out, and I want to take a moment to talk about Mohammad Khadra, the Spirit of the "Y" Youth Leadership Award recipient, and Sherry Connell, this year's Dr. Stanley Brown Memorial "Y" Values Award winner.

Mohammad is a 15-year-old student at Brockville Collegiate Institute who has used his kind and compassionate energy to become a role model to elementary-aged school children at the Y. Since last year, he has been assisting with three programs, including giving up his time to help with the Saturday youth night event. Currently, you can find him at the Y on Wednesdays from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m., helping children get involved in sports, do their homework and pursue healthy lifestyle activities.

Sherry is certainly no stranger to Y members, as she volunteers at least four times per week. That's an amazing level of commitment and dedication. The local Y has recently reached a milestone of 5,000 members and I'm told they couldn't survive without Sherry volunteering all those hours every week on the membership services desk.

I'm so proud to add my congratulations to Mohammad Khadra and Sherry Connell on this special occasion. Their involvement in the YMCA has enriched the lives of thousands and set an example of active citizenship to which we all should aspire.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I am receiving emails from Torontonians all over the city about the recent agreement between Premier McGuinty and Mayor Ford to dismember the Transit City plan. As people write, "This new plan builds only half as much new transit as was promised in the original Metrolinx Transit City plan, but it costs more! Worse still, it leaves out the very communities and neighbourhoods the original plan was designed to help!"

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):

The ayes are 69; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just want to make two comments. One is, I'd like the House leaders to maybe talk about this issue of walking in votes. I watched very clearly, with the doors open, a member coming down a hallway, thinking that they were coming for a vote, and then with the vote being walked in, that member not being allowed to get in and standing right at the door. So I just put that out for members for discussion.

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I also want to make some comments about this morning's question period. The members will know that I have, on more than one occasion, reminded members that the use of temperate language is necessary for the preservation of the dignity of this place. Today's question period had numerous examples, on both sides of the House, of language that was something less than temperate.

It is challenging for the Speaker to maintain a flow in the question period with interruption and without constant interruption. It is made even more challenging when the noise level makes it difficult to hear every word from every member, including those who properly have the floor. To some extent, there has to be some individual responsibility on the part of all of you to resist the use of language that casts this place into disrespect.

I heard comments. I had a note passed to me about one member questioning the integrity of another member—issues such as, "How can we trust you to run the system?"; "You haven't got a clue"; "Stealing the forms." It's coming from both sides of the House.

I realize that we are in the lead-up to an election campaign and things will get heated in this chamber, but as elected officials, I know that it is within each of you, that you do have the ability to use temperate language, use language that is becoming of this place and use language that is going to set an example, whether it is to the young

Bad enough that Torontonians are being left to choke on auto exhaust, wait ages for a bus or sit in endless traffic jams, but the agreement is very unclear as to whether or not the plan must go before city council for debate before it proceeds.

Premier McGuinty must make it clear that this new plan will require a council debate.

ONTARIO CHIROPRACTIC ASSOCIATION

Mr. Dave Levac: It indeed is a pleasure to rise in the House to offer a warm welcome to the representatives from the Ontario Chiropractic Association who are with us in the Legislature today.

It might be of interest for you to know that the Ontario Chiropractic Association represents approximately 3,000 of the province's practising chiropractors. As accomplished health professionals who deliver care to over 1.2 million patients in the province, chiropractors provide diagnosis, treatment and preventive care for disorders related to the spine, pelvis, nervous system and the joints. OCA members are committed to educating patients and the public about their health while empowering them to make informed decisions about treatment options and their overall wellness.

For the second year running, groups of chiropractors will be meeting today with MPPs and government officials to talk about the contributions made by the profession to the health care system and share their experiences from our various constituencies. Of course, it would not be Queen's Park Day without the Ontario Chiropractic Association's reception for all MPPs.

A number of the OCA's members have travelled from ridings across Ontario to be here today to let us know how they are making a difference for patients living in our communities. I personally welcome Dr. Ivone De Marchi of the OCA, who represents Brantford.

I encourage each and every member of this House to attend the reception that the Ontario Chiropractic Association is hosting this evening here, in committee rooms 228 and 230 from 5 o'clock to 7 o'clock, so that we can all meet our representatives from our ridings. I hope we can all count on your attendance.

SMART METERS

Mr. Randy Hillier: For the past few months I've been asking questions and delivering statements on behalf of my constituents, calling on this Liberal government to end their expensive hydro experiments. I have told this government time and time again that their smart meter tax machines are doubling and tripling the hydro costs of my constituents, increases they simply cannot afford.

But today, the issue hits even closer to home for me. I just received this month's hydro bill for my constituency office in Perth and couldn't help but notice that since the smart meter was installed in my office, the usage has now doubled from the same time period last year.

While the McGuinty Liberals would prefer that parents have their children get ready for school before 7 a.m. and cook their dinners after 9 p.m., they can't possibly expect the constituency offices of my fellow members to also follow such ridiculous hours of operation.

There is something wrong with the McGuinty government's smart meter tax machines. Even without the time-of-use pricing, his new tax machine has doubled our constituency office hydro usage.

More than 8,000 people saw their usage triple last year, according to Ontario Hydro—8,000 people.

It's up to the McGuinty Liberals to come clean and account for yet another one of their expensive hydro experiments.

Speaker, I did bring in my hydro bill, which I'll bring over. I see the Minister of Energy is here—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The member from Scarborough Southwest.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise today to acknowledge our government's commitment to building a modern transit system for the city of Toronto. On March 31 of this year, the Ontario government announced that it has committed \$8.4 billion towards expanding Toronto's subway and rapid transit lines.

Our new transit plan will have a profound impact in my riding of Scarborough Southwest. Scarborough's aging rapid transit line will finally be replaced by a modern, new light-rail transit system. The Scarborough line will also connect to a new underground light-rail transit system along Eglinton Avenue, which will help to ease congestion and reduce pollution along one of Scarborough's busiest streets.

The residents in my riding and all across the greater Toronto area are getting a better deal under the government's new plan. The McGuinty government understands that building a stronger transit system will help reduce gridlock, improve air quality and build stronger communities. That's why our government has funded important infrastructure projects on the TTC, which has increased bus services along some of Scarborough's major routes. That's why our government has worked closely with the mayor and the city of Toronto on a revised plan to improve public transit, and that's why our government is committed to making the largest transit investment in a generation.

GASOLINE TAX

Mr. Ted Arnott: With every new tax fee and price increase, Ontario families know this: They have a provincial government that is, at best, totally indifferent to their economic hardship.

The latest example: Yesterday the Minister of Finance categorically rejected a cut to his government's HST on gasoline. Canadian Press quotes the minister: "You see overnight swings in these prices much larger than the

HST.” How insensitive. How callous. People who are struggling know that every saving, no matter how small, makes a difference in their household budget. Every little bit helps. This may be a revelation to certain ministers, with cars and drivers, who haven’t noticed that the price of gasoline has gone up.

The minister could have acknowledged that rising gas prices are causing real financial pain. The minister could have also offered some encouragement on rising gas prices. But he didn’t so much as indicate he wanted to find a solution. Instead, he just made excuses.

Here’s the worst part: The McGuinty Liberals continue to deny small and rural municipalities their fair share of gas tax revenues. Cities with transit systems receive a portion of the 14.7-cent-per-litre provincial gas tax. Small-town and rural Ontario municipalities without transit systems still have to maintain their roads, but this government leaves them out in the cold. Our caucus has long advocated that this discriminatory policy must change so that all municipalities, large and small, can provide the transportation infrastructure that they need. Again, I call upon the government to address this inequity.

LONDON EMPLOYMENT HELP CENTRE

Mr. Khalil Ramal: On Friday, April 1, Minister Bentley and I attended an open house at the London Employment Help Centre. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the excellent work being done in my community by this outstanding organization.

The employment help centre is a community, not-for-profit, charitable organization that provides employment services at all stages of the job search process, free of charge, including career counselling, individualized job placement services and how-to workshops, as well as access to essential resources in today’s job-search market, including computers with Internet access and a voicemail service.

1510

The centre receives funding from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities as well as from the United Way and various community donors. Community organizations like the London Employment Help Centre play a pivotal role in rebuilding the province’s economy, helping laid-off workers to find new jobs and helping to equip individuals with networking and job-search skills.

I want to congratulate the employment help centre for the excellent job they’re doing in my community of London, Ontario, and especially in London-Fanshawe, because they help a lot of laid-off workers to find jobs and support their families.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PINK

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I rise today to speak to International Day of Pink, which takes place tomorrow all around the world. This is an internationally recognized day to take a stand against bullying, discrimination and

homophobia. I know all members in this House agree that there is no place for bullying in our schools, at work or in our communities.

Our government has taken a strong stance on bullying in Ontario’s schools and made it clear that bullying is never acceptable. That is why we passed our safe schools strategy, which creates serious consequences for violence in our schools but also recognizes the importance of prevention targeted at stopping bullying before it occurs.

To prevent bullying, we must address the root causes. To help combat homophobia in our schools, we have brought in the first-ever equity and inclusiveness strategy. It requires school boards to have policies in place to combat discrimination based on race, gender, age, disability or sexual orientation.

Speaker, and all members of the Legislature, please join me tomorrow in wearing pink to show our support for the fight against bullying, discrimination and homophobia. Together, we can build a more inclusive and supportive Ontario, and our government is committed to achieving this goal.

2011 ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Bill Mauro: Very soon, both opposition parties, Conservative and NDP, will have an opportunity to support both a budget motion and a budget bill. There are significant measures contained within our budget that I’m hoping they’ll find the capacity to support: first of all, the full implementation and funding of full-day kindergarten; 60,000 new college and university spaces, which are very significant, including spaces at Lakehead University and Confederation College in my riding.

Also significant, I would suggest, given the economic situation on the planet for the last couple of years: \$44 million over three years for literacy and basic skills—hopefully, that will gather some attention from them as well; \$93 million a year for a province-wide mental health and addictions strategy, a strategy that all members from all parties had a hand in formulating—I’m hoping they’ll find the capacity to support that; \$15 million a year to expand Ontario’s breast screening program, a program that will provide 90,000 more screenings for women who are at risk of developing breast cancer due to their genetics or family history, that will see the age for eligibility reduced to 30—very significant; and, of course, a piece very fundamental and important to northern Ontario is an increase in the northern Ontario heritage fund from \$90 million to \$100 million, an additional \$10 million in that budget. It was always at \$60 million. We’ve gone from \$60 million to \$70 million, \$70 million to \$80 million, \$80 million to \$90 million and, this year, from \$90 million to \$100 million—very important in northern Ontario.

I’m hoping the opposition parties can support that.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated April 12, 2011, from the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FARADALE FARMS LTD. ACT, 2011

Mr. Martiniuk moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr39, An Act to revive Faradale Farms Ltd.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm pleased to rise in the Legislature today to recognize this week as National Volunteer Week. National Volunteer Week gives all of us the opportunity to say thank you to Ontario's five million volunteers. It gives us an opportunity to celebrate the generosity of our volunteers and to honour their spirit of service.

Mr. Speaker, I know it is important to you that this year's National Volunteer Week theme is "Volunteers: Passion. Action. Impact." I can't think of any more appropriate words to describe our hard-working volunteers. Our volunteers embody a passion for service. Their passion and commitment results in meaningful action. That action makes an impact, a positive impact that creates stronger and more vibrant communities right across Ontario.

Whether as advocates, coaches, mentors, fundraisers, board members or in countless other roles, volunteers get results. Quite simply, volunteers change the world, and they build our communities. Their enormous contributions help make Ontario the best place in the world in which to live.

Our generation has inherited a powerful and proud tradition of volunteerism, a tradition that we must preserve and pass on even stronger to the next generation. We recognize that volunteers are the heart of our community, and that's why we support an active volunteer engagement and recognition program. We do so through Ontario's annual Volunteer Service Awards. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Volunteer Service Awards, which recognize the outstanding contributions of exceptional Ontario volunteers. Since its inception, more than 150,000 Ontarians have proudly received the honour of the Volunteer Service Award. In 2011 alone, we have 48 ceremonies in 35 communities that will recognize another 10,000 devoted and deserving volunteers.

During National Volunteer Week, we will also present the June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Award for Voluntarism. This award recognizes individuals, businesses and other organizations for their outstanding volunteer contribution.

To encourage and engage the next generation of volunteers, this week we will award the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers to youth who have performed outstanding community service. Yesterday, the Minister of Education and I launched the fourth annual ChangeTheWorld Ontario Youth Volunteer Challenge in Belleville. The youth volunteer challenge has captured the imaginations of our young people. Last year, more than 11,000 of them took action and volunteered more than 42,000 hours.

Ontario must continue to support our strong tradition of volunteerism and to find new ways to work together with the not-for-profit sector. That's why, last month, our government announced Ontario's strategy to create a stronger partnership with the not-for-profit sector, and to help guide this strategy we are creating a partnership advisory group which will include leaders from the not-for-profit, public and private sectors. We are also establishing the partnership project office to help renew and streamline and modernize the government's relationship with community organizations and to provide better coordination.

Volunteerism and service help define our province and our people. It is this spirit that brings out the best in all of us, in our communities and in Ontario. I urge the members of the Legislature to recognize their community volunteers this week and during the Volunteer Service Awards ceremonies taking place in the coming weeks. Please join me in applauding the dedicated volunteers of all ages and all backgrounds who make an immeasurable difference to the lives of each and every one of us each and every day.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's an honour to stand on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, again this week to talk about the importance of recognizing in this announcement National Volunteer Week from April 10 to 16.

I know that I join with the minister in paying tribute to the more than five million Ontarians who give something

back to our province by volunteering every year. Whether people are coaching our children in minor sports, being a companion for our seniors or helping at the hospital auxiliary, they do it quietly and for a compensation that's not defined by dollars and cents but by the invaluable feeling we get when we help in extending our hand to others. These dedicated citizens put their own busy lives on hold and contribute 800 million volunteer hours annually.

1520

Imagine how much of what we love about living in our communities across Ontario would disappear if not for our legion of selfless volunteers. All across the province this week, organizations are holding special volunteer appreciation ceremonies to give their hard-working helpers a moment of well-deserved glory.

Earlier today, I was privileged to talk about two of those volunteers, Mohammad Khadra and Sherry Connell, who were the special award recipients at last evening's Brockville and Area YMCA volunteer awards gala.

Like every member of the Legislative Assembly, I'm looking forward to attending the annual Volunteer Service Award ceremonies later this year. As the minister stated, it's the 25th anniversary of that event. The volunteers who will be recognized at these ceremonies come from all walks of life and are all ages. But I think it's important to focus on youth volunteers, especially as the minister has issued the 2011 ChangeTheWorld Ontario Youth Volunteer Challenge. As the minister said, it's a three-week initiative which aims at getting teens more involved in volunteering.

Of course, we should remember that it was the PC government in 1999 that had the foresight to issue the mandatory 40-hour volunteer credit for Ontario high school students. I'm proud that our party recognized then, as we do now, that instilling the spirit of volunteerism in our youth today is essential to create a generation of active and engaged citizens tomorrow. It's worth noting that the legacy of this program is that the volunteer rate among youth ages 15 to 24 in Ontario is now a remarkable 63%. As the minister quoted, over 11,000 youth volunteered 42,000 hours of their lives in 281 not-for-profit agencies.

In that spirit, I want to mention some of my local events because the minister encouraged us to be involved in our local communities. The Volunteer Bureau of Leeds and Grenville, in my riding, has taken up the minister's youth volunteer challenge. On April 20, 180 students will converge on the Mac Johnson Wildlife Area, a local conservation area that's a popular place for people to connect with the outdoors year-round. These students will spend the day giving the area a spring cleaning, learning from having hands-on lessons about the value of protecting our natural resources as they work side by side with a group of volunteers, the Friends of Mac Johnson. They will work in groups with a biologist to talk about the role of science and the environment and what they play in our lives. I'm confident that this experience will

inspire many of the participating students to explore new ways that they can make a difference, whether it be preserving a cherished nature reserve or helping a not-for-profit organization.

This weekend I'm also participating in my community's 10th anniversary edition of the local mayor's walk, which raises funds for the Volunteer Bureau of Leeds and Grenville. Under the very capable direction of Frank Rockett, our volunteer bureau helps connect 15,000 volunteers with more than 50 agencies in 38 communities in my riding. I'll be at this weekend's walk doing something—many of us in Ontario will make that special opportunity to say thank you to the millions of volunteers who play an important role in making our—

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: I am walking, Minister—to make a better place for our communities.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an honour to rise on behalf of the New Democratic Party and our leader, Andrea Horwath, and to speak about National Volunteer Week. Certainly, you've heard the numbers from my esteemed colleagues: five million in Ontario, some 800 million volunteer hours that are spent. Certainly, 95%, we know, of all Canadians volunteer at least part of their time.

It's an interesting fact that I don't think has been mentioned that the idea of Volunteer Week was first started in 1943. It was started to draw the public's attention to the contribution of women. So, it had a gendered beginning of women during the Second World War, because we remember that women took over many of the roles that were performed by men in their families during that effort. Certainly, in our own community, in Parkdale-High Park, every June I host a dinner where we recognize the 12 top social activists and volunteers in our riding and also five new businesses that have weathered the storm and managed to start something in difficult times. We certainly pay homage to all of them.

I want to use a few minutes of my time, however, to focus on one primarily volunteer-driven organization, and that's victims' services. It's not far from here. I suggest to every member that they drop in. It is just around on 40 College Street, housed in the police services building there. And sadly enough, when I heard the announcement from the Attorney General of the hundreds of thousands that are supposedly going to the victims of crime, I thought for a minute, "Oh, wonderful. Finally victims' services will have their day, finally they'll get some relief," because they haven't had any money from this government for a long, long time.

Now, to understand victims' services, here's what you need to know: First of all, 150 volunteers work out of there. They contribute 20,000 hours of volunteer work, and what do they do? They are the first respondents to victims of crime. That's who they are. So I'm appealing to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and to the government House leader and any other members of cabinet who sit around the table to please make sure some of that money goes to them. Here is why: Many of the victims of crime don't ever see their day in court. We

know this. And the money that the Attorney General announced is going just to court support services. Here we have volunteers who go out with a staff person in the police car, responding to the moment of crime, to the victims of crime on the scene, and they haven't seen a dime. I immediately emailed them when I heard the announcement—Bonnie Levine is their executive director, a hard-working woman—and I said, “Did you get some of this money, Bonnie?” She said, “Not a dime.”

So, please, I am really pleading with you for them, because without them, victims would not see anybody at the scene of the crime, and we know that many victims of crime, unfortunately, particularly of homicide, never get their day in court. They never are involved in court at all, fortunately or unfortunately, as the case may be.

The other thing we should know about victims' services is that the major crimes they are called to are situations of domestic violence against women, so there's another gendered aspect that I would like to highlight here. Having just had the Girls in Government here, with their wonderful teachers who took time away from their busy schedules to get them active and involved in the political process and to meet ministers here and in Ottawa, again, we know how important the contribution of volunteers is, particularly women volunteers, because, let's face it, that's the bulk of volunteers as well. It has a gendered face.

So I appeal to all those across the aisle, on behalf of Bonnie Levine and victims' services: Please step up. It has come to a point with victims' services where they're simply not going to be able to respond unless they get more money from this government. They're simply not going to be able to do what they do, volunteers or no volunteers, unless out of some moment of insight the Attorney General changes the rationale for how this money is being delivered and gives some to victims' services—the obvious recipient, first of all, of any volunteer award, but second of all, any money that goes to victims and their needs.

Please take that to heart, and again, here's to all the volunteers who work in all the agencies across Ontario. The best to all of them. Thank you so much. You in fact are keeping this province running.

PETITIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Steve Clark: “Whereas the McGuinty government is pushing ahead with the installation of so-called smart meters and mandatory time-of-use billing by June 2011 despite the flaws with the program; and

“Whereas 21 energy distributors, including provincially owned Hydro One, said that the rush to make time of use mandatory by June 2011 doesn't give them time to fix all the problems with the meters, fix bugs with the

software to run them, and to fix the inaccurately high bills they produce as a result; and

“Whereas the Ontario Energy Board, in a letter of August 4, admitted that energy distributors ‘may encounter extraordinary and unanticipated circumstances during the implementation’ of time of use, and said that ‘these matters need to be addressed’;

“Whereas relying on computer technology that the energy industry says is not ready, isn't reliable and is making families pay too much on their hydro bills;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To call upon the McGuinty government to suspend the smart meter time-of-use program until billing problems are fixed and Ontario families are given the option of whether to participate in the time-of-use program.”

1530

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'd like to read a petition on behalf of my constituents Zofia and Henryk Nieradko.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are over 7,000 people with disabilities waiting for the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services' special services at home (SSAH) funding and almost 4,000 on wait-lists for Passport funding; and

“Whereas such programs are vital and essential to supporting Ontarians with developmental disabilities, and their families, to participate in community life;

“ARCH Disability Law Centre, supported by Family Alliance Ontario, People First of Ontario, Community Living Ontario, Special Services at Home Provincial Coalition, Individualized Funding Coalition for Ontario and the undersigned individuals and organizations, urge the Ontario government to take quick action to substantially improve developmental services.

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“—Ensure that all qualified Passport and SSAH applicants immediately receive adequate funding;

“—Make the application and funding allocation processes transparent; and

“—Ensure that sufficient long-term funding is in place so that eligible Ontarians with disabilities can access the supports and services they need.”

I agree with the petition, affix my signature to it and give it to page Christopher.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Toby Barrett: This is a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario families are struggling in an economic downturn to meet the demands of eco taxes,

the HST, energy price hikes, wasteful spending and increased taxes;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"Initiate the process for legislation to allow Ontario residents to recall Dalton."

I affix my signature and apologize for the wording at the end of this petition.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

"Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known and universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health agrees to proceed with clinical trials of the venoplasty treatment to fully explore its potential to bring relief to the thousands of Ontarians afflicted with multiple sclerosis."

I agree with the petition, will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Jimmy.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Toby Barrett: This petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario families are struggling to help put their kids through university;

"Whereas students in Ontario graduate with an average \$26,000 in debt and have the highest tuition and largest class sizes in the country; and

"Whereas Ontario tax dollars should be kept in Ontario to help Ontario students, not sent overseas;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly to call on the McGuinty government to cancel its plan to give foreign students scholarships of \$40,000 a year and reinvest these funds in scholarships for Ontario students."

I sign this petition.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and I want to thank the Food For All Food Bank in Prescott for providing it to me.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas agriculture plays an important role in Ontario's economy and deserves investment;

"Whereas PC MPP Bob Bailey has introduced a significant tax credit for farmers who donate agricultural goods to food banks, helping farmers, food banks and people in need; and

"Whereas over 25 million pounds of fresh produce is disposed of or plowed back into Ontario's fields each year while food banks across Ontario struggle to feed those in need;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call MPP Bob Bailey's private member's bill, Bill 78, the Taxation Amendment Act (Food Bank Donation Tax Credit for Farmers), 2010, to committee immediately for consideration and then on to third reading and implementation without delay."

I agree with the petition, will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Leighton.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and I want to thank Amy Preston for providing it to me. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

"Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known and universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health agrees to proceed with clinical trials of the venoplasty treatment to fully explore its potential to bring relief to the thousands of Ontarians afflicted with multiple sclerosis."

I agree with the petition, will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Riley.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 173, An Act respecting 2011 Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters, when Bill 173 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs; and

That the vote on second reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet on Thursday, April 21, 2011, during its regular meeting time for public hearings, and be authorized to meet on Thursday, May 5,

2011, during its regular meeting time, for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the clerk of the committee shall be 5 p.m. on Thursday, April 28, 2011. At 5 p.m. on Thursday, May 5, 2011, those amendments which have not been moved shall be deemed to have been moved and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. The committee shall be authorized to meet beyond the normal hour of adjournment for clause-by-clause consideration on Thursday, May 5, 2011. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession, with one 20-minute waiting period allowed, pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Monday, May 9, 2011. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith and at such time, the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called that same day; and

That when the order for third reading of the bill is called, one hour shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That the vote on third reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bells shall be limited to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Ms. Smith has moved government notice of motion number 56.

Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: As we in this Ontario Legislature have debated this latest have-not budget, it has become clear that this have-not province's Premier really has no intention of halting the high spending, the high taxing and the high deficitting—if that's a word—that sees all of us paying for bigger government and smaller results.

It's also clear that it will take a real change of direction, concrete action, to dig out of this hole. While I realize that government forces are waiting in the wings to cut off debate on this spending plan, I appreciate the fact that it has given me and my colleagues in the opposition an opportunity to make it clear that there's a better way.

1540

You can time-allocate all you want, but it won't stop us from opposing the budget and the various measures, and presenting our plans to give families relief and to reallocate taxpayer dollars to services that people care

about and services people need—front-line health care, for example.

We brought forward a number of ideas to redirect this government's course from its poorly-thought-out experiments and wasteful spending. To start, time allocation or not, we've proposed pulling the plug on the mandatory smart meter tax machine to give families a choice on their electricity bills. As well, opposition leader Hudak continues to call for a forensic audit on the debt retirement charge on our electricity bills, a debt that should have been paid off by now. Families have already paid \$7.8 billion on this \$7.8-billion debt.

Part of our goal is to end wasteful spending. We need to cut wasteful spending, and this debate allows us to expand on some of our plans to close the doors on the regional health bureaucracies, the LHINs—again, put every penny back into front-line health care.

Last week, opposition leader Tim Hudak introduced and debated legislation to initiate a sunset review process through an all-party committee of all the 600-plus agencies, boards and commissions to root out wasteful spending. Government has become too big, too expensive, too clumsy, and part of that is exemplified through a number of these agencies that may well have their due date coming up.

I should move on with respect to time. I'm just getting started here.

In recent months, we've also made clear our plans to deal with a series of concerns that are siphoning off and wasting tax dollars. We will provide clear and tight time frames that will ensure public sector agreements reflect the ability of families to pay, by bringing in more transparency, bringing in more accountability to the arbitration system.

We'll take on the unfair distribution of gasoline taxes, building on some of my attempts to establish a mechanism to ensure rural municipalities receive the full benefit of gas tax transit initiatives.

In rural Ontario and northern Ontario, roads and bridges are our form of public transit. We pay the taxes at the pump. We get nothing in return if our municipalities do not fund public transit. Again, the price of gas goes higher, as we all know, and to be standing there pumping gas, to read the list of provincial road taxes, let alone the HST—and to realize that none of those taxes are coming back to a riding like mine, Haldimand—Norfolk. In this House, I've presented petitions from the Dunnville area—well over a thousand signatures to investigate the establishment of connecting public transit links between Haldimand county and Norfolk county and to ensure rural municipalities receive the full benefit of the gas tax transit initiative. Again, there's no initiative from this government.

We remain the only provincial party to pledge the return of municipal decision-making power on wind towers. We will also eliminate the practice of paying out inappropriately expensive subsidies under the Green Energy Act, the FIT program. Again, since the passage of this government's flawed Green Energy Act, we've

watched in my area, indeed right across Ontario, as wind towers pit neighbour against neighbour. There's little doubt in my mind that we do need municipal oversight, oversight that has been ripped away from our municipally elected representatives by this draconian attempt to usurp power and implement a "green at all costs" agenda, again through the Liberals' Green Energy Act. We've made very clear our demand for a moratorium on wind power until we see the return of this municipal decision-making. I have about 200 wind towers coming just to the southern part of Haldimand county.

This government does not want to hear some of the issues that were raised as recently as last week, sticky situations—former deputy health minister Ron Sapsford receiving \$762,000. This was the year after he quit during the eHealth scandal. We will end the practice of paying outrageous severances to public servants.

Interjections.

Mr. Toby Barrett: The members opposite obviously don't want me to talk about some of these things and issues that were omitted from their budget plan. We summarized much of this in what was referred to as the "10 for 2010" campaign. Again, in the budget there's no mention of plans for a one-year payroll tax holiday for all new hires, for example, a program that would help young workers; a one-year suspension of the land transfer tax to help families achieve the dream of homeownership; an end to corporate welfare and the practice of picking winners and losers in the marketplace. We will bring in a cap on government spending—all part of an overreaching plan to end the out-of-control, wasteful spending exemplified in this, Ontario's recent have-not budget.

Before I wrap up here, I feel it's important to note that in this budget, in my riding, our tobacco economy has been deep-sixed, replaced by illegal tobacco that has bankrupted not only farms but businesses, companies, corner stores. The scrapping of a state-of-the-art coal generation facility—600 people used to work there. How can we run a steel mill down at US Steel? You can't do it on windmills and solar, certainly not at 80.2 cents.

The treatment of commercial fishermen, cattlemen, hog farmers, cash crop, fruit and vegetable seems to be merely an afterthought rather than—usually, just before an election is looming, there is a bone thrown out to some of these groups.

Most importantly, five years ago this government ran away from two girls who were protesting in a Caledonia subdivision, which was allowed to explode into the most expensive, largest, longest-lasting occupation in the history of Ontario, bringing Caledonia, Haldimand county, Brant and Brantford to their knees.

Thanks, Premier Pinocchio, for promising in your first election—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I ask the member to withdraw that.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I withdraw—promising in your first election no new taxes, then bringing in the largest income tax increase in the history of Ontario. Thanks, in the last election, for promising no new taxes and then

bringing in the largest sales tax increase in the history of Ontario.

I predict that to try to win this coming election, Dalton McGuinty will promise no new taxes and then go to work at becoming what I would consider a three-peat liar, a bald-faced liar.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I ask you to withdraw.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I will not withdraw, and I will address my comments to the Speaker. I will not withdraw. These are billion-dollar decisions.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'm sorry. I'm asking you to withdraw the comment.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I will not withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I name you then, Toby Barrett.

Mr. Barrett was escorted from the chamber.

1550

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Well, here we are again: faced with a time allocation motion on something that I consider quite important, the budget for the province of Ontario. It's not like it's a thin document. We're talking about over 300 pages of information, none of it in bold or anything like that, a big font. Certainly, something that is worth a little bit of debate. It is worth debate because when you look at it, you realize that there is lots that has been slid into the budget bill that tends to, how could I say, irritate me to the utmost.

One such thing that has been slid in there is this tiny, weenie little motion that had been defeated when we were talking about Bill 122, the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act.

Let me bring you back to November 2010; November 29, 2010, to be precise. After years of requests, people finally gained access to freedom of information for our hospitals. Hospitals are huge in Ontario; we're talking \$22 billion from our taxes, from the government, going to support our hospitals, yet hospitals had no transparency. If somebody had an event that they were not happy with, they had gone through the process within the hospital but they still hadn't gotten closure and they still hadn't gotten the information they wanted, that was it. With hospitals, you could not go to the Ombudsman if you had a complaint against your hospital and you could not have access to information because you could not file a freedom of access of information for your hospital.

Finally we have the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act, and finally hospitals—starting in 2012—are going to be FOI-able. You're going to have access, through freedom of information, to information that you've never had access to before, information that a lot of families—basically, if they could have had that information, they could have had closure, they could have moved on. But no, we have a lot of people out there who have been going through tough times because they didn't. So things look pretty good.

Then we go—I'm back on November 29, 2010. We're going through clause-by-clause and here's this tiny little motion that says we will give freedom of access of information, but a hospital won't have to comply if it has to do with quality improvement. On one hand, everybody agrees; myself to start. We all support quality improvement in our hospitals. I mean, this is how we improve things, and we're all in favour of this. The problem is that we had waited for a long time to get freedom of access of information for our hospitals. Finally we were getting it, but at the last minute came this little clause that says, "but a hospital won't have to comply if it has to do with quality improvement." So when this came in clause-by-clause, I voted that down.

I do want hospitals to have the opportunity to talk about quality improvement, but in a very narrow way, because if you think of all of the teaching hospitals in this province, their motto is, "Continuing quality improvement." Everything they do in teaching hospitals has to do with improving quality so that they can be at the forefront of best practices and share those best practices with all of the other 157 hospitals in this province.

So what does that mean? That means that if everything you do is part of your continuous quality improvement, then if we had passed this motion, nothing that they did would have been accessible to freedom of access of information. All you had to do was say, "It's part of our continuing quality improvement discussion. Therefore, we're not going to share that with you." All of this hard work that people had fought for and all of the government's talk about wanting to make the public sector more accountable was all for nothing, because you were giving the hospitals a reason to refuse to share any information whatsoever on the basis of continuous quality improvement.

I had voted this down, and we thought life was going to go on. Yet, you go to page 281 in this lovely little 300-page book, and here's this same motion that had been voted down, the same motion that the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario didn't want in there and ImPatient for Change didn't want in there and a whole bunch of other health care agencies didn't want in there. They slipped it into the budget bill. I have no idea why they did this.

At the end of the day, this is why we need time for debate. When the government brings forward a time allocation motion, what that means is there will be very little time for us politicians to speak about the bill. It will also mean that when it comes to the people of Ontario having an opportunity to have their voice heard—and believe you me, there are already 100 people who want to speak about those two lines on page 281 of the budget. What about the other 300 pages of that budget? People have something to say. But, no, this House is about to pass a time allocation motion that will mean the MPPs, who are there to represent their constituents, won't have much time to talk about it. That will also mean that everybody else who found something that they wanted to encourage the government about, congratulate the gov-

ernment about or bring a sober second thought from the government on—none of them will have an opportunity to be heard.

ImPatient for Change is a group of citizens in Ontario who have unresolved issues. They are people who have had experience with our hospital system, who went through the hospital system, came out of it and, either for themselves or their loved ones, have questions unanswered. They have run into issues for which they have exhausted the policies of the individual hospitals, and they were looking forward to being able to file freedom of access of information. But if the budget bill goes on as written—and it will, because we have a majority government, and they'll vote in favour, and that will be the end of that—then all those people who have fought for such a long time, those hundreds of Ontarians who need closure because of an event that happened in one of our public hospitals here in Ontario, won't have access to information, their need for closure won't be answered and they will continue to wonder.

I would say the basis of them being able to turn the page, to have closure, is access to information and transparency. There's often nothing to hide, but when you don't have access, you don't know this. So you continue to worry, you continue to wonder, and you don't have closure in your life.

Life-and-death events take place in hospitals every day. People are born, people die, and life-changing events take place in every one of our hospitals on a daily basis. It's no wonder that conflicts sometimes arise. It's no wonder that sometimes people want more information about what went on. But hospitals will be off limits. All they will have to do is say, "This is part of our continuous quality improvement."

1600

I had asked, how about if we say that whenever we have a discussion about quality improvement, we label it as such? So if there is a written document about it, all you have to do is say upfront, "This is about quality improvement." If you want to bare your soul and say, "I could have done better," and you want truly open discussion, I understand that fully. Put it under the label of quality improvement, and this paragraph won't be FOI-able, but the rest of the information will be. They refuse to do this.

If we were to put a limit as to how continuous quality improvement can be interpreted in freedom of access to information, we would all feel a whole lot better. But we won't have an opportunity to bring those changes forward. The hundreds of people who have pushed for this legislation to come forward won't have an opportunity to come forward either, because the government is putting forward a time allocation motion, which will limit debate and will make sure that the good people of Ontario never have a chance to be heard.

The budget has some good in it. I have no problem giving credit where credit is due. I spent 18 months—and I see some of my colleagues are in the House right now—on the Select Committee on Mental Health and

Addictions. When I saw an investment in mental health in the budget, I was thrilled. I was happy. I have no problem congratulating the government for including this in their budget. I know that times are tight, but they recognized that that was a situation that needed to be addressed.

In the health care field, we often say that mental health is the poor cousin of physical health, and within mental health, children's mental health is the poor cousin of a poor cousin. Not much has been invested in children's mental health, and it is about to change. This is in the budget. So this is certainly something I would support wholeheartedly. I congratulate them, and I can't wait to see how this will be rolled out.

In the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions report, we have some broad strokes as to the path that we would like those dollars to follow and how to make sure that we get the biggest bang for our buck when it comes to improving the mental health and addiction issues of youth in Ontario. We've made some recommendations that are system-wide, with the creation of Mental Health and Addictions Ontario.

So are there some good things in the budget? Absolutely. This is a good one, and I would like it to move forward.

But there's also some bad stuff in there. The problem is that you are not willing to have a discussion where we could vote on those issues separately, so that I could show my support for part of what's in the budget but we could also allow the people of Ontario a voice when it comes to items in the budget.

Frankly, I have no idea why a motion that changes the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act, Bill 122—how come it found its way in there? What does that have to do with the budget anyway? It has nothing to do with the budget, but they slipped it in there—I guess to make sure that I would vote no. I'm not too sure. A budget is supposed to talk in broad strokes about money: "Here's the money that we bring in, here's the money that will be spent, and here are the programs it will go to." Why is it that we find things like this in the budget that irk me to the zillionth level?

There are other little pieces of the budget that also kind of irk me. The budget speech, on page 6, says:

"Ontarians worked together to help their neighbours with jobs in the auto industry.

"Together, we made emergency assistance of \$4.8 billion available to General Motors and Chrysler to protect the hundreds of thousands of jobs in a key driver of Ontario's economy." Ain't that grand?

I come from northern Ontario. I represent the people of northern Ontario. I look at what's happening in the forestry industry, and I'm hoping, as I go through the pages, that I will see Ontarians working together to help their neighbours with jobs in the forestry industry—that we all put our shoulders to the wheels, band together and help the forestry industry. But do you know what? It is nowhere to be found.

We don't talk about the forestry industry. We don't talk about the difference it would have made if we had treated forestry jobs the same way that we treated auto industry jobs, but it is nowhere to be found. You won't even find the word "forestry" in there. Yet if we were to apply the same principles that were applied to the auto industry, we could see a completely different picture being painted in northeastern Ontario and certainly in the areas that I represent.

Other things that are sadly missing are anything referring to a poverty strategy. When the campaign was going on in 2007, one of the big promises was to bring forward a poverty strategy. We had a minister who travelled—she's now the Minister of Health, but at the time she was in charge of the poverty strategy. She went all over the province. They listened. They were supposed to lay out the plan. It rolled out a little wee bit.

We are still in the same mandate. Ontario is now the child poverty capital of this great country of ours, and poverty is nowhere to be found. Where are the investments so that we can see finally that we are taking poverty seriously and we have a strategy that will help? Where is the investment in child care in this budget? The minister who was responsible and who listened knows the direct link between access to public child care and poverty.

Where is the investment in supportive housing, in public housing? There's not one new unit; there's not one iota of money for renovation. There is so much missing that we thought would find its way. You cannot talk about being serious about a poverty reduction strategy without talking about housing.

Coming back to the example of mental health, most mental health strategies are based on housing first. If you don't know where you're going to sleep tonight—like Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Food and shelter are the primary needs of every human being. If you don't know where you're going to sleep tonight, if you are homeless, there is no way we can start to do any kind of work with your mental health problems or your addiction issues. The first thing you need is housing. So housing should be at the centre of a poverty reduction strategy, yet we have this Bill 173, an act representing budget measures, and you don't see anything in this bill.

Here we have a time allocation motion that has been placed ahead of us. We won't be able to put on the record a lot of shortcomings, as well as other little tidbits that have been inserted into this budget bill that frankly don't belong there but are there nevertheless and that I could never support. So the people who want to be heard won't have an opportunity, and certainly the people in this House won't have an opportunity. We're talking about 300 pages—and that's the English side; the French side is even longer and better.

I see that time is running on the clock, and given that it is a time allocation motion, I will have to stop here. There is way more about that budget that people need to know. They need to know that way more of those tidbits that don't belong in a budget whatsoever have been

inserted in this bill and will be voted on whether we support them or not. It doesn't matter if there are some good things in there; they've also inserted a whole bunch of other information that I could never support.

1610

I'm also time allocated to a maximum of 40 minutes, which I'm sharing with my colleague from Welland. I thank you for your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'll be sharing my time with the other members as well. I think I have about 10 minutes here today. I thank you for the opportunity.

I'm going to begin just by saying that the member from Nickel Belt just concluded her remarks and made the comment that you can look through the budget book—this book here—and there's no mention of forestry in the book. I'd refer her to pages 34 to 37. She will see mention of forestry in the book, and she'll also find in there other programs of interest to the people of northern Ontario.

But anyway, what I wanted to talk about today is the budget. Of course, people who follow this on television will be aware and will know that we introduced our budget one or two weeks ago. Contained within the budget are some significant items of interest, especially, to me, the \$10 million of increase to the northern Ontario heritage fund, taking it from \$60 million up to \$100 million over the last four years: a major, significant investment in northern Ontario. Other programs like the breast screening program, making the age of eligibility now 30 for people at risk, and on it goes—some very significant pieces. But the deficit also became part of the discussion by many members when we began talking about the budget. I'd like to spend a little bit of time talking about that.

I think the book—I don't have the number exactly, but I think it's projected to be \$16.7 billion. I think we're about \$3 billion lower than we were expected to be in the province of Ontario—\$16.7 billion.

As many people will know, we've just gone through the greatest recession, as it has been described by almost everyone, since the Great Depression. Some 30 million to 40 million jobs were lost worldwide during this economic cataclysm. Of course, Ontario and my neck of the woods, northern Ontario, did not miss being sideswiped by this tsunami of bad news, and on and on it went—30 million to 40 million jobs. We took an approach, during this economic crisis, that led obviously to a significant portion of this debt and in-year deficits being accumulated.

What I want to talk about a little bit before I go into the main body of my remarks, though, is how it's always been remarkable to me how at the federal level, as we speak about debt and deficits here in the province of Ontario over the last year or so—that when we talk about the federal government relative to the provincial government, it always seems to be portrayed that Mr. Harper and the federal Conservative government do a very good

job of managing the economy, that they're good stewards of the tax dollar, that they've managed to shepherd us through this economic crisis. When the opposition members have an opportunity to talk about the province, of course, they don't quite portray it that we've done as good a job here in the province of Ontario. But the numbers tell us a different story, don't they?

Interjections.

Mr. Bill Mauro: My friends, I have them engaged across the aisle. I'm happy to see them smiling and engaged.

The in-year deficit in—I forget the year; I think it was 2010. The federal government's in-year deficit, I believe, in 2010—I could have the year wrong—exceeded \$60 billion. One year—Mr. Harper and the federal Conservatives. Our in-year high water mark was \$19.7 billion, so less than a third.

Ontario represents 40%, give or take, of the nation's economy. Yet their in-year deficit, federally, was three times, give or take, greater than the deficit that we accumulated here in the province of Ontario year to year, when you compare year to year. I just want to put that on the record, speaking to the people in northern Ontario who are interested in this issue of deficit and total debt and reduction.

It's important to know that at the federal level, where people seem to think they're doing this wonderful job—they're saying that the economy is coming back. If you watch their ads on television right now, they're saying the economy is coming back. Well, guess what? If that's true, it's not coming back unless Ontario's coming back, so something good is going on in Ontario as well. Some 91% of all the jobs lost in the recession are now back, and 84% of those are full-time jobs. So if the federal government's doing a good job of managing this economy and bringing us back—I'm speaking to the people in northern Ontario—then something good's going on in Ontario as well. I just want to make that comparison. I think it's important to put it on the table.

When we talk about deficit and debt reduction, though, I think the other part of it that we would hope the opposition members would speak to, when they speak on the issue of deficit and debt, is what it is they would not do; what are the projects they would not expense or spend on? Because of course the contradictions are apparent every day you come into this place. If people who are following this debate on television today, back in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan, are watching and following this, they'll notice the contradiction on a very daily basis. On the one hand, they'll criticize for what those numbers will be, but oftentimes their questions in question period or their comments during debates are asking us why we haven't spent more on a particular project.

At some point, the opposition needs to tell the people of the province of Ontario, as we get ready to enter an election, what it is they're not going to spend. Where are the reductions that they're going to make? Is it health care? Is it education? Is it infrastructure? We know their

history when it comes to those three things. In fact, in the previous term of government of the Conservatives, 1995 to 2003, that was one of the major ways that they funded their tax cuts: by not increasing funding to infrastructure and by making reductions in other areas. So at some point we will see a plan from them, and hopefully that plan will outline exactly what it is that they're not going to spend money on so that the people of Ontario can know that.

In my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, some of the projects that we've made a commitment to go forward on that have all of this spending, which contributes to our deficit and our debt—including in my smaller communities, like Oliver Paipoonge, Neebing, Atikokan, O'Connor, Conmee and Gillies, and the list goes on—have all received money through infrastructure and a variety of other programs. In the city of Thunder Bay, the gas tax, for example: \$6 million to \$7 million, minimizing the impact on the municipal tax base through that one program. That's \$7 million over seven years. I think in Thunder Bay, \$1 million is about 1% when it comes to the tax base in the city, give or take. So just on that one program alone, I could point and say—on the gas tax alone—that we have prevented a potential 7% increase in municipal taxes, not to mention all of the other uploading we've done through the OMPF fund.

Going forward in my riding of Thunder Bay, there are two major projects that I want to talk about a little bit. One is a courthouse, moving forward: a \$200-million project, give or take, that we're moving forward on. Why am I highlighting that? There are dozens that I can highlight here in the 10 minutes that I have. But it's a \$200-million courthouse that's going forward.

The opposition likes to say and think that northern Ontario is always forgotten and left out. Well, if you check the budget document, you'll find that we've set aside, for the time being, a courthouse in downtown Toronto that was scheduled to be built. With apologies to my Toronto friends, we've delayed a \$180-million project—we're keeping the money—but the one in Thunder Bay is still going forward, a \$200-million project. Pretty significant.

A new long-term-care home, a building that we're building brand new—300 beds, it began with, when the city of Thunder Bay made a decision to close two older homes—has now grown to include about another 100-plus beds. It's well over 400 beds. That project's another \$100-million construction project. The total value of just those two projects alone: \$300 million.

Maybe somebody in the opposition wants to tell me, if they were to get the privilege of being in government here in the very near future, if those are projects that they would stop and put the brakes on, if they're concerned about deficit. We've made decisions. We've made choices, and I can tell you about some of the people who are very happy with some of these choices. The building trades in my riding couldn't be happier with this government when it comes to the investments that we've made in infrastructure: \$300 million on those two projects, give or take.

Two coal plants in my riding—I think there were four or five. One is gone; four are left. Two are in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan. In the 2003 election, all three political parties, all three political leaders—Howard Hampton of the NDP, Ernie Eves of the Conservatives and Dalton McGuinty of the Liberals—committed to closing coal plants in the province of Ontario. We're keeping two of them open by converting them. The two in my riding—the one in the city of Thunder Bay and the one in Atikokan—are both going to remain open. The construction value of those conversions and the ability to burn cleaner biomass and create other related jobs is another \$200 million to \$300 million.

1620

That's \$600 million of investments I've talked about that's going to occur in my riding. Some of it has started already; some of it is still to come.

My 10 minutes is up already, I'm very sorry to say. I've got a really long list of things I'd love to be able to spend more time talking about.

What I'm hoping to hear from the members in the opposition is, which of these projects, if you want to talk about deficit and debt, are you not going to spend money on?

I didn't even get a chance to talk about health care and the angioplasty provision in the city of Thunder Bay for the first time; a 50% or 60% increase in the base funding of the hospital, Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre—on and on the list goes.

Yes, we made a decision when it came to deficit and debts. Unlike what occurred in the 1930s and the last great recession, the Great Depression, when governments did not play a significant role, we took a different approach, as did most national and subnational governments all over the world. They chose a different path this time. They chose to invest. They chose to put stimulus into the economy. They chose to create jobs so that families wouldn't suffer as severely as they did 90 years ago, so that unemployment rates would not soar like they did 90 years ago and we could maintain some semblance of a strong economy, going through what was an extremely difficult time. We're finding ourselves coming out of that now.

My time is up. As I said, I wish I had more, but perhaps another day.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 173 and the time allocation motion in regard to the budget. I'll say right now that I won't be supporting this bill, for one main reason—

Interjections.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'm sorry to disappoint my friends on the other side.

It's mainly, in my case, because of the decision in the one line in the budget where they're going to close the Sarnia jail in my riding, which, according to them, is old and underutilized. That's not the case, as they will find out in the days to come as the Sarnia–Lambton commun-

ity rallies and makes the case here to the minister and to the finance minister that they were perhaps misinformed by their bureaucrats or whoever.

I'm going to make the case today that I'm appalled at the arrogance of the government, that they did not bother to consult with anyone in our local community—not the police forces, not the mayor, not the staff working in the Sarnia jail—and the record shows it.

The budget said that the jail was underutilized and that by transferring inmates from these older facilities, they would save \$8 million a year. Well, the Sarnia jail is, on average, at 105% overcapacity. Sarnia's jail is the newest small jail in the province.

The McGuinty government, as I said, did not consult with local officials before deciding to close this jail.

Sarnia is one of the only jails in the province that has no direct transportation costs associated with getting inmates to and from court, as the courthouse is connected to the jail by a tunnel. A number of prisoner transfers take place every day, on an ongoing basis, in a safe and secure environment. Last year, almost 3,000 inmates went through court security from the jail with no direct inmate transfer costs. Transferring over 3,000 inmates from Windsor to the Sarnia courthouse will drastically increase transportation costs. As we always like to say, there's only one taxpayer at the end of the day. When the minister says those costs are going to be absorbed by the OPP—well, at the end of the day, that's going to be taxpayers in Sarnia—Lambton and across Ontario.

For those of you who aren't aware, Sarnia is also the second-busiest border crossing in the province. There will be a number of issues with customs and immigration. I've taken the time to speak to those people, as the minister and his staff should have. Some of the government members should make themselves aware of that. They'll certainly take the time to make that case before this week is over.

Immigration: For those who don't know, if someone is picked up at the bridge at the border crossing, those people are taken to the Sarnia jail, where they're admitted. They don't turn over the transportation of that individual to anyone else. Those immigration officers, whether it's RCMP—they have to do that directly. So that's another police force that this government never bothered to consult with. That's a federal issue, and I'm certain that's going to have some bearing on this decision.

I make the case today that this decision will be reversed. They'll find some way to back away from this. I don't know how, but it will be reversed.

Also, when there's a smuggling issue—I've talked to border services in Sarnia. There's a case for those who are the legal beagles here in the building that when you arrest someone for alleged smuggling, there's a chain of custody. The arresting officer, who would be with Canada Customs, would have to take that individual to the jail, see them arrested, and then they would go and pick them up and take them to the court the next day when they appear for their arraignment. So this idea that

people are just going to run willy-nilly up and down county roads across from Sarnia to Windsor is ludicrous. There's no transportation available for prisoners' families or even legal aid. If you want to get to Windsor, there's no direct transportation routes. You'd have to take VIA, for example, to London, then you'd catch another train from London to Windsor—not very practical, I might add. But obviously, this government isn't into practicality.

In 2009, there was a 21% increase over 2008 in people who were administered and passed through security. Court security: There were 4,292 in the court last year. The county picked up the costs of the administration of the building itself for security. There were 3,600 adults—male and female prisoners; the rest were young offenders.

The courthouse tunnel is very unique and a secure transport for this jail facility. The cellblocks on the second floor of the courthouse are overcrowded, so people are only kept there for a minimal amount of time and then they're moved back and forth continuously to the jail. Something that's not going to happen, I might add, with this jail facility—whether it's going to be a jail bus or, as someone said, a chain-gang-type bus back and forth to Windsor every day, it's not practical. It's not going to work. We know that at the end of the day this won't happen. I don't care what the minister says in this budget, I know it won't happen.

When we deal with all these issues with court security, when we talk about customs, immigration—I met with a number of people involved in the court system yesterday and they brought up something I'd never thought of. He said, "What about prisoners who are on medicated drugs?" He said, "When you pick that prisoner up in Windsor at the facility there, someone would have to take possession of those medicated drugs while they're on the bus, all the way to Sarnia, to the court, and then someone at the other end would have to receive them. They would put that person in a holding cell, and then sometime during the day, if they needed medication, someone would have to administer it."

This is just a totally ludicrous kind of decision. People obviously put no thought into this. It looks like something somebody pulled from thin air. It won't work and I can tell you that it's not going to work.

David Esser, who is the chief steward for OPSEU, took issue with their remarks when they said it was underused and expensive to operate. He said that as of yesterday, April 11—two days ago now—the jail in Sarnia was actually operating at 125% of capacity. He took issue with the \$180 charge that they said it would cost to run the Sarnia jail. He said that there's no jail in Ontario that operates for the \$125 they quoted.

This jail, when it was built about 50 years ago now, with many numerous upgrades over the years, was built as part of a three-piece complex. The heating, electrical and cooling aspect is actually in the jail facility itself and it heats and cools the court facilities. Those costs would still be there at the end of the day.

They said there were no video remand facilities. Apparently they didn't check with the people who actually administer them because there actually are. They've had that for five or six years and they actually spent, it looks like, \$300,000 over the years installing that, and it works very well.

The chamber of commerce, which was also there, represents 1,000 members in the area, with 20,000 employees. They are asking for a cost-benefit analysis done by an independent review to make sure that the numbers the minister was giving—I'm sure he was sincere in his remarks, but they just don't stand up.

1630

This trip from Windsor to Sarnia would take two and a half hours each way, plus the cost for fuel. The OPP would have to set up a separate command that would actually transport these people. You wouldn't do it in one van; you wouldn't do it in two buses; you'd probably be doing shifts.

What about weekend sentences? How does someone who's serving a weekend sentence, who gets out on a Sunday night or Monday morning and tries to hold down a job and then has to show up again at the jail facility to serve their weekend sentence—they're probably on minimum wage. They wouldn't be able to get transportation to the court.

Actually, there were two representatives there from the First Nations community in Sarnia-Lambton and the Kettle and Stony Point First Nation. They spoke about the family and community supports that are necessary for their people—their access to legal aid. They're probably one of the more—they said this themselves—over-represented populations there. They have big concerns for their First Nations people and their communities, that they would be in jeopardy because they wouldn't be able to access family and those kinds of supports. This Windsor hare-brained scheme—for want of another word—certainly wouldn't lend itself to them.

There was a Helen Turner there, representing the Sarnia legal society, the lawyers. She says that it's "an absolute disaster for justice in Sarnia-Lambton. We would need to see a cost-benefit analysis to ensure that this is accurate." Prisoners would have to be brought in in shifts and held at the jail. There are 8,000 new charges a year in Sarnia-Lambton—three to four courtrooms a day with judges—and access to clients by lawyers who are representing a number of people on legal aid would be impossible.

No public transport—she raised the issue—between Sarnia and Windsor; intermittent sentences Sunday to Friday—I touched on that already. Another item that she and the First Nations leaders spoke about was the Gladue court decision, where there is a bill before members of the First Nations to access a unique form of justice for their communities. I think the member from Welland is going to speak to that maybe later. He's nodding his head at me. I asked him for his advice on that.

What about snow days? We have all kinds of days. The member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex is here

today, and she knows the kind of weather we have in Sarnia-Lambton and Lambton-Kent-Middlesex—a number of days when school buses don't run. I can't see these prisoner buses running if school buses and other people are off the roads and the OPP have closed them. And those are major highways; what about some of these county roads that they would have to travel to get back and forth to Sarnia?

Like I said, the quickest way between Sarnia and Windsor is through Detroit and Michigan, but I'm sure that there won't be any of these prisoner buses running through the United States of America. I'm positive they won't be travelling down in Michigan. The member from Windsor is looking at me there, and I'm sure she agrees. I think she agrees with me. She's nodding her head.

So we know that they won't be accessing that means of transport to make it accessible to Windsor.

A number of other items that the district labour council spoke about: They're concerned about the jobs and the loss to the local community. These 76 jobs would represent somewhere around \$6 million in salaries and benefits that would be spent in the local community. It would certainly have a major impact on our community. The escorts would have to appear in court at 9 a.m. to appear. If you're going to be in Sarnia at 9, that would mean that someone would have to be leaving Windsor around 6 in the morning. Like I said, the paperwork to turn these prisoners over to this transport system with their medications and that—and what if someone, God forbid, had a seizure because they either got the wrong drugs or they didn't get their medication when they should have got it? Who's going to take that responsibility for that liability?

Vince George from the First Nations community of Kettle and Stony Point spoke. He said that this would have a big impact on the First Nations community. He also spoke about the Gladue recent court decision. He said that travel costs for native families to Windsor would be prohibitive, and a lot of them wouldn't have transportation or a method of getting back and forth.

I spoke about our jail and about the stats. This current jail is supposed to open in 2013, so I think we have lots of time to work on this. I'm going to work with the community. I met with the mayor; the local OPP; the Sarnia police chief, who's certainly against this; the Royal Canadian Mounted Police; the two First Nations police forces; the Canada Border Services Agency; the president and also members of OPSEU, plus many other members of the community. They're certainly opposed to this. They think it was wrong-headed.

When the Minister of Correctional Services and Public Safety was asked, "Minister, how much will your government save by closing the Sarnia jail?" Minister Bradley responded, "We don't have that dollar figure right now, other than the percentages." The minister stated to the Sarnia Observer that the daily cost of accommodating a prisoner will drop from \$180 in Sarnia to \$125, but like I say, members of our Sarnia-Lambton community question that. They want to see a cost-benefit analysis.

Mayor Bradley, the mayor of Sarnia, says, "It doesn't make sense to transfer ... inmates by bus from Windsor when the Sarnia jail is connected to the local courthouse by a short tunnel."

Quotes from Dave Esser, who is the union chief for the jail guards: "It would appear that half the jails in the province are less efficient than we are."

"How do you run?"—well, actually, this is partisan. But anyway, he said, "How do you run as a Liberal in Sarnia when the police budget is going sky-high because your party is shutting down the jail? I mean, what are your chances?" Well, that's partisan. I wouldn't have said that, but he did.

I could say a lot more, but I want to leave time for my colleague here. I know he's got a lot of good points that he wants to raise. At the end of the day, I won't be supporting this budget for a number of reasons, mainly because of what it's going to do to my local community in Sarnia-Lambton.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: People have got to understand: We've already had the debate on the budget speech and the motion that followed that speech. That got its eight hours of standing order debate. We're talking about the bill now, and regrettably, this bill bears so little resemblance to what was, in and of itself, a rather pathetic budget speech. It was thin gruel delivered in desperate times by a desperate government, and I tell you, it has not been well received in the communities where I've been spending my weekends, down in St. Catharines and Welland and Thorold and Port Colborne and Wainfleet.

What the finance minister didn't tell us when he read his budget speech, nor were we told when the government introduced Bill 173, was that, remarkably, stuck into this bill is the legislative framework for online Internet gambling, sponsored by none other than Dalton McGuinty and the government of Ontario: the online Internet gambling that will lure younger and younger gamblers—indeed underage gamblers, not just youthful but kid gamblers—and the Internet gambling scheme that will undermine the jobs in Windsor and Niagara Falls and other casinos and will, rather than control or address or meet or in any way, shape or form confront problem gambling, aggravate it and cultivate it.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: So are you the Bradley mouthpiece now?

Mr. Peter Kormos: The minister notes. Because, you see, the Minister of Economic Development recalls her colleague and my friend the Minister of Community Safety when he was a vociferous foe of slot machines and broad-spread, unfettered gambling, including the sad, sad explosion of slots in our racetracks, which has served to do little more than destroy families and undermine our racetracks' horse racing, horse breeding—and large parts of the agricultural industry in this province, like the agricultural industry down in Niagara, where I come from, that depended upon horse racing to sustain themselves.

Let's take a look at schedules 17 and 34, because as I say, hidden away in this budget bill—we heard nothing about this from a single government spokesperson, either in the budget speech, in the debate around the budget motion, in the introduction of this bill or, indeed, in the pathetic and sparse commentary by government members on this budget bill itself. Let's understand, we're debating a time allocation motion. That's a gag motion, a guillotine motion. That motion and the frequency with which it's been used by the McGuinty Liberals demonstrates a disdain for democracy, a disdain for Parliament and a disdain for parliamentary process.

1640

There's a reason why there are three readings to a bill. Indeed, if you go back a couple of hundred years, there used to be five, six, seven readings of a bill. If you listen to government members who somehow shake their heads in shock at the fact that somebody would want to debate a bill and its substance, and who just—because, of course, the government members, on the rare occasions when they're allowed to speak, or given their Coles Notes, the cheat sheets, the spin—and as often as not they consider a two-minute question and comment as participation in this debate, when all it is is a meagre, feckless effort to get one's name on the record for a 16th of a page of Hansard.

Where are the government members defending Internet gambling, sponsored by Dalton McGuinty and Ontario's Liberals? Let me tell you why I'm concerned about this. I'm concerned because when I hear what people say, like folks down in Las Vegas—as a matter of fact, in the New York Times of October 2, 2010, you have, "At the same time, officials here are watching another potentially disruptive storm on the horizon: legislation in Congress that would legalize Internet gambling. Mr. Brown said he was hopeful that online gambling would not draw people away from Las Vegas because 'Internet gambling appeals more to addicted gamblers than people who are seeking a casino experience.'"

When you're doing Internet gambling at home, you're hard-core. You don't even have the illusion of saying to your spouse, "Honey, let's go to the casino tonight. We'll see"—who would you see perform at the casino? Wayne Newton, or whoever it might happen to be. "We'll see Wayne Newton at the casino, and maybe, heck, we'll have dinner and spend a hundred bucks." Mind you, to be fair, casinos don't make any money on the people who only drop a hundred bucks at the slots or at the wheel. Casinos are very much like cigarette manufacturers. Cigarette manufacturers tell people, "You don't have to smoke a pack or two or three a day; just smoke one cigarette a day." Hell's bells, we know better than that. Cigarettes are inherently addictive, and that's the whole idea of the process, because if smokers only smoked one cigarette a day, the tobacco industry would have failed years ago. Any more so than the spirits industry makes money on the people who—I remember in my family there would be a bottle of Crown Royal. It would last for four or five years.

Mr. Steve Clark: Not at my house.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The member notes.

My father would have this bottle of Crown Royal, and I'm sure on Christmas Eve there was a celebratory smallest of drinks, and then the bottle went back in the closet and came out a year later and a year later. The liquor industry doesn't make money off of people who buy a bottle of booze every five or six years, or even every year. The liquor industry and the beer industry, the ones that advertise—we see the ads on TV, and again, they're geared towards young people—make money on young people who are heavy drinkers, excessive drinkers.

Casinos and gambling institutes don't make money on the occasional gambler. They don't make money on the senior citizen who takes the bus from the seniors' centre up to Casino Rama with fifty bucks in their pocket. They lose money on those people. They're not interested in those people. The casino and gambling industry is interested in young people, just like the booze industry is, and just like the tobacco industry remains—although now they're doing their marketing in places like China, amongst other places. Because you want to bring them in when they're young. You want to hook them as quickly as you can.

As I say, it's interesting: In the debate in Nevada about legalized Internet gambling, there's concern about Internet gambling because Internet gambling appeals more to addicted gamblers than people who are seeking a casino experience. It makes sense, doesn't it? It makes common sense. The casinos draw their fair share of addicted gamblers, but at the very least, in most instances, you've got to put on a fresh set of clothes, you've got to travel to where the casino is, and there's some interaction with other people. Internet gamblers are up at 4:30 in the morning, sitting in last night's underwear. And kids, increasingly, will be gambling.

Look, what we've seen is the tip of the iceberg when it comes to gambling addictions here in the province of Ontario, especially when it applies to gambling on devices like the Internet and the computer.

We've got a whole generation of young people, with more to come, who have been nurtured on computer games, who can tweet like nobody's business. I'm told that there has been research done that demonstrates, increasingly, that when young people ring a doorbell, they don't use their forefinger like you or I would do, but they use their thumb, because that's the pattern they acquire from tweeting. We've got a whole generation of people who are ripe for the picking, who are fresh for the gambling industry, who are tuned in to using computers, using BlackBerrys and using iPods, and who have been, Pavlov-style, trained to respond to the bells and whistles and bright lights etc. This is all part and parcel of the addictiveness of computer gambling.

That's why a slot machine isn't a one-armed bandit any more. Heck, you put your card in there and just keep pressing the button. I'm not even sure you have to keep pressing the button.

Again, quoting from that same New York Times article of October 2, 2010: "Senator Harry Reid of Nevada, the Senate majority leader who is in the middle of a bruising re-election fight, said he would oppose such a move"—that is to say, Internet gambling—"because it would hurt the state's tourism industry and cost jobs."

Let's go on to another authority, none other than the chief executive officer of Wynn Resorts, Stephen A. Wynn. He knows a little bit about gambling.

"Other operators like Wynn Resorts have argued that online gambling would, among other things, cannibalize profits by reducing casino attendance."

This is very important: "The chief executive of Wynn Resorts, Stephen A. Wynn, also stated last year in response to a reporter's questions that he thought it 'would be impossible' to regulate Internet gambling."

What schedules 17 and 34 do is because the traditional definition of a gaming place, for the purpose of the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Commission running a gambling operation there, has been a place. Of course, whatever's out there that constitutes the Internet isn't a physical place. So the government has had to amend the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation Act by adding "gaming site" means premises or an electronic channel maintained for the purpose of playing or operating a lottery scheme." That's it. That's the legislative scheme.

Take a look at 17, and you see how futile the government even acknowledges it is to regulate who accesses these things.

Please, listen to this one. If it weren't so sad, it would have you rolling in the aisles. "No individual who is under 19 years of age shall enter or remain in a gaming site, except ... in the course of employment." That means a gaming place like a casino or the slots at the racetrack or inside that electronic channel on the computer.

This is lovely. This is the government's response to the high risk that they're exposing young people to: "No person shall permit an individual under 19 years of age to play a lottery scheme in a gaming site." In fact, there's nobody permitting or not permitting. You've got a 13-year-old kid with Mom's or Dad's credit card, accessing a gaming site in his or her bedroom, or at the family computer, for that matter, and nobody knows who that kid is at the other end of the gaming site. Nobody has any idea who he is. We all know about the anonymity of the Internet.

1650

It is absurd. It is absurd to suggest that that section proposed in this facilitative amendment—interestingly, part of the budget bill—in any way controls, restricts or monitors access by teenagers or younger people to gaming sites.

Take a look, just real quick now, at what a couple of experts have had to say about gambling in general and young people. There's an interesting decision in the Ontario courts: *Dennis v. Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.* It was a judgment of Justice Cullity. The interesting parts are the expert evidence that was received from two

experts, and I'm referring to the reported decision in 101, Ontario Courts, 3rd Edition.

Dr. Kevin Harrigan "is a research associate professor at the University of Waterloo where he teaches and conducts research in computer-game design including electronic gambling games.... His particular research interest at present is in understanding whether and, if so how, structural characteristics of slot machines may explain why so many people develop an addiction to them." He's identifying slot machines as inherently addictive.

And understand that when the government's talking about Internet gambling, it's not talking about participating in, let's say, a poker game, which I acknowledge is a game of mixed chance and skill. It's talking about the good stuff when it comes to people operating gambling casinos, whether it's the mob or the government of Ontario, and the two are increasingly indistinguishable from each other—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, there's a reason these Internet sites—I'm not going to be playing poker on the Internet with other poker players. They're going to be slot-style. That's why Dr. Kevin Harrigan's comments are important. That's why his evidence in this trial about the inherent addictiveness of slot machines is relevant.

Catch this: Dr. Harrigan "described in considerable detail how it is a distinguishing characteristic of slot-machine gambling that the player wins very frequently while as a matter of statistical probability, his bankroll steadily declines as the wins are reinvested.... He expresses the opinion that slot machines are highly addictive and that the misleading features of the machines contribute to the addiction."

The government knows this stuff. This isn't a secret. This government is as guilty as the drug dealer outside a schoolyard, getting kids hooked on whatever the drug happens to be at that particular point in time. This government is as guilty as any cigarette industry executive who, again, preys on young people, getting them addicted to deadly tobacco. It knows these machines and these games are addictive, and it knows that it can't control access to them when they're on the Internet. It knows that the Internet has no capacity whatsoever to screen who accesses it, and the evidence is, oh, so clear.

Another witness in the same trial, Dr. Robert Williams, "has a Ph.D. degree in psychology from McMaster University.... Among the opinions Dr. Williams provided on the basis of his research and experience were that, apart from biological and psychological factors, contributing factors to the likelihood that a person would engage in problem gambling include:

"the availability of electronic gambling machines, which because of high rates of reinforcement, illusion of control and deceptive 'near miss' features, are the most addictive forms of gambling"—the availability. You put these on the Internet, sponsored by the government of Ontario and Dalton McGuinty, and you're making them available to everybody. You don't even have to leave

your house. If you're an adult, you don't have to shower or shave. If you're a kid, you do it in the secrecy of your bedroom. I don't know very many kids who don't have computers nowadays in the province of Ontario.

The "likelihood that a person would engage in problem gambling include:

"(i)—I already mentioned;

"(ii) erroneous beliefs about how gambling works and the probabilities of success;

"(iii) the ready availability of funds through nearby automated cash machines; and

"(iv) ineffectual self-exclusion programs."

This is very dangerous stuff, and the government has hidden it away in a budget bill and has not been forthcoming about the fact that it's even there, never mind exposing these two schedules, 17 and 34, to the public scrutiny that they deserve in public hearings. This time allocation motion that we're debating today, that this government is going to ram through, will restrict public hearings to about one day here at Queen's Park. This is repugnant stuff. It is shameful that a government would engage in such atrocious activities. It should be fighting gambling and the ruin that gambling causes rather than encouraging it and profiting from it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to join in the debate for the time allocation motion—as the member for Welland said, the gag order, the guillotine order—that the government has put forward. I appreciate some of these sections that he has talked about—section 17, regarding the Gaming Control Act, and section 34, on the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation Act—regarding Internet gambling, which we haven't heard a peep from the government on.

It is ridiculous to have one day of public hearings as part of this time allocation motion. It reminds me of the discussion we had at the general government committee a week ago, when we decided to have our proceedings of our hearings, since we weren't going to the north—which was another ridiculous decision by the government, not to go up north to deal with Bill 151. One of the motions that I put forward, because I think we need to have more technology involved in this place and get some of this paper off, maybe allow me to give a member's statement from a tablet or at least do it—as I think the finance minister talked about. But we talked in the committee about streaming our presentation. We couldn't seem to even get our head around to include that in the ad promoting the hearings. Even when we had the hearing yesterday—and we're again in committee tomorrow—there was a little tiny reference, a little tiny link on our front website, about the general government committee.

I have no feeling of happiness when we can't even get our head around promoting a live stream of a committee, let alone give the government the hands on the Ontario Lottery Corp. to provide online gambling. We can't even add electronics to our deliberations here at Queen's Park;

why should I feel that this government has any aptitude for starting online gambling? I don't.

I would like to talk about two sections of the act. I know that they've been mentioned before. One of them is schedule 10 under the Education Act, which I don't think was part of the discussion. The other, which I'll mention in a few moments, is schedule 15, regarding freedom of information. Schedule 10 amends the Education Act, subsection 218.2(2), which governs the code of conduct that applies to board members, whether permitted or required under this act. It basically clarifies that the minister can prescribe codes of conduct for school boards. I know that the member for Newmarket–Aurora had expressed some concerns about trustees in his area. In my own riding of Leeds–Grenville, when we had the discussion about closing schools, the public board, the Upper Canada District School Board, went through an exercise called Boundary 2020 that resulted, unfortunately, in a number of rural schools being closed. I know how some of the trustees felt muzzled once the decision had been made, that they couldn't, under the act, speak their minds on whether they disagreed with the act because, once the board ruled, they felt muzzled.

1700

I know that in my riding we did elect a number of new trustees, trustees that I think heard at the door that people wanted some change in the way that the board did business. I really have expressed concern about hampering trustees. If you don't want trustees to do their job as a government, you should just come right out and say it, because we think these elected officials should be able to speak freely on behalf of their constituents and be able to represent them. I'm extremely concerned about this code of conduct and what muzzling this government and the Ministry of Education are doing on truly and duly elected trustees.

The other section that the member for Nickel Belt brought up was schedule 15, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act amendment regarding hospitals. I do have a lot of issues, and I'm glad that she brought it up earlier in the debate. I have two issues that I'd like to talk about that relate to that. Just these two alone, schedule 10 and schedule 15, give me cause not to vote in favour of the budget.

The freedom of information—I have a constituent, Arnold Kilby, who I think has emailed every single, solitary one of the members of this Legislature probably 100 times. His daughter, Terra Dawn, passed away a number of years ago and he has been fighting ever since to get answers from the hospital board. He has been up against a brick wall with the Health Professions Appeal and Review Board; the College of Physicians and Surgeons has been like a brick wall to him to get answers. The Death Investigation Oversight Council—this man has tried to get answers from the hospital, from ministers. I remember he wrote the Minister of Community Safety, and the OPP came to his door questioning him about his emails. I couldn't believe it.

All the man wants are some answers. He certainly doesn't have the means to litigate. All he wants are some answers surrounding his daughter. I can appreciate what he has gone through with these bodies, the brick wall that he has hit, and to have further provisions removed for freedom of information at hospitals—I just don't understand that.

In my own discussions in this House, just in the last couple of weeks, about the South East LHIN and the surgery department at Brockville General Hospital, I brought up this plan twice in the House. My critics say that I'm creating this mirage. I've seen the plan. A doctor shared with me the plan and shared with me the discussion around the plan. All I asked was that it be taken off the table. If I was such an extreme MPP to bring this up that it was at the far end of the spectrum, why didn't you just take it off the table? I asked for a public meeting to take place. Well, lo and behold, I read the daily newspaper in Brockville this morning, and the headline is, "Surgery Update Heard Secretly by BGH Board." When I see schedule 15 restricting freedom of information, and I see LHINs operating in a shroud of secrecy in a significant recommendation that would gut the surgery department, and I suggest gut the Brockville General Hospital, I have every right to bring it up as the MPP in that riding. I can't believe, when I read the local paper, that this update by the LHIN would be held in a secret meeting with the board. I can't understand it.

Taking away freedom-of-information rights from hospitals: I can't support that. I can't support it because of the issues with my surgery department, but more importantly, because of my constituent Arnold Kilby and his poor daughter and the answers that he has been trying to get. We need to make sure that he has that opportunity.

I know that there are some members who talked about predictable funding for municipalities, and I'm pleased that today I received a resolution from the municipality of North Grenville. It's not a township. It's one of the fastest-growing communities in eastern Ontario. They have a wonderful service called North Grenville Accessible Transportation. They don't run their own transit system; they're a predominantly rural community. But they've got this great not-for-profit corporation and, unfortunately, they can't access provincial funds because they don't run a conventional transit system. I think that's just wrong, so I compliment the municipality on putting this forward. They've submitted it to me, and I'm looking forward to hearing what Minister Wynne has to say, because I think it's extremely important, especially in a rural riding, that if there is this type of service for disabled persons, the government should listen.

I also want to talk about risk management because that's something that certainly on this side of the House we've talked about a lot. I think many Ontarians are glad that finally, at long last, the government opposite has at least announced it. I haven't seen any section in the act regarding business risk management, but I must say that the member for Oxford brought up an interesting point yesterday on the fact that the budget for the Ministry of

Agriculture is actually \$52.6 million less than it was the year before. I certainly am concerned about that because, in my riding, agriculture plays an important role. I've met many times with groups from all of the sectors that make up the Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition. I met with them very recently, just prior to the federal election being called. I know that they've talked to both the federal MP and me about the importance of that. They certainly knew where our party was on the record. They heard loud and clear from our leader, Tim Hudak, at the International Plowing Match that he was committed to the program. They certainly know that the member for Oxford was in favour of the program. I was pleased, when the grain farmers met in my riding earlier this year, that I could tell them I was committed to the program as well. But I still don't see any details here on the program. The grain farmers wrote me yesterday to thank me for my support.

There's still the issue of the permanency of the program. I think that needs to be clarified at some point, whether the program is permanent, and some of the details, because they're not part of this budget document.

The other issue—and I know I only have a few minutes left—is the issue of mental health. I know that we're debating a private member's resolution or private member's bill on Thursday. I hope to get the opportunity to speak to that because I know that mental health is such an important part in my riding. The minister isn't here—I know I'm not supposed to say that; I apologize. Withdraw.

Our community is very much in favour of a secure treatment centre for women. It's a wonderful broad-based group that we're working with in the community. We're working with our federal member and our federal senator, Bob Runciman. We've got sectors from all over; the chambers of commerce, the municipalities and OPSEU are at the table. We hope that this government, at some point, will come to the table to support our community. We have a fabulous male secure treatment unit that has had wonderful success. Recidivism has decreased by 38% in the male population that is served in that male secure treatment centre. Knowing the mental health issues that are evident in our prisons right now with the female population—this is a critical issue that needs to be addressed. The people of Brockville and the people of Leeds–Grenville are very welcoming. They want this facility to add to the expertise that we have on the site.

My final comment is going to be on CCSVI. I put some petitions in earlier today. I know that there is a lot of discussion by the members opposite, although I can't see the document, about breast cancer and their increasing funds. However, I know that people who have MS are extremely concerned about the government's panel. People in my riding whom I've talked to call it a non-expert panel; the minister refers to it as an expert panel. I think it's really suspect, some of the people who have been on that committee, and the lack of individuals who have an expertise with CCSVI, people like Dr. Sandy

McDonald, Dr. Gary Siskin and Dr. Salvatore Sclafani, just to name a few.

Many people who are sufferers from CCSVI and who want the government to act have written the minister. I haven't seen a response, but I know that these people are extremely concerned with this panel, that there is a bias against the procedure and that the minister has set up a panel that will not be impartial, will not provide for the review that these people wanted. I know that the minister thought that that was fabulous, but many people in my riding have expressed otherwise. So I hope, prior to this being passed, that she'll go on the record and address those issues about the bias on her panel.

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In closing, I will not support this motion. I think that there is much to change and I think that there has to be a lot more public input and a lot more things coming out of this government on some of the—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further debate? The member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Applause.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I thank my good friends and colleagues across the aisle for the little round of applause.

I also want to acknowledge the commentary of the previous speaker, my colleague and, if I may say so, my friend from Leeds–Grenville who, whatever else, spoke for the folks in his community. I have to tell the folks in his community that he's a pretty good hockey player. I hope he's going to remember to bring his stuff for the Legiskaters' last game on the 18th because, as the goaltender for that team, I look forward to standing in the nets and knowing that Steve Clark and Howard Hampton are in front of me—and I know I've used members' names in the House, but I hope I've used them in the correct context.

I'd like to just make a few comments on the budget and the particular motion on which we're speaking. Two budgets ago, coming out of the wicked recession that Ontario inherited from the rest of the world, people said to me prior to that budget, "We've run a number of budget surpluses in a row. What is our province going to do? Are they going to throw us out of the boat in this particular budget? We're worried about our particular sector," particularly if people were in the auto parts or auto sector itself. They said, "What's going to happen to us? Is our province going to be there for us?"

People also said, "Are you going to balance the budget at the expense of completely gutting some of the services that we depend on? Does that mean that our hospitals will close? Does that mean that we're going to crush public education?" And the answer to that, of course, was no, because perhaps the only thing that we didn't want to do more than borrowing all the money that the province of Ontario did was not borrow it. That was probably the worst alternative we faced. So we said, "We're Ontarians. We've encountered these difficulties before. We're strong people, we're hard-working people. This is money. We can borrow it and we can repay it, but we

can't replace the careers and the lives. We can't replace an entire lost industry, if that's what we have to do to pay the price of getting out of the recession."

So we chose at that time in 2009, in 2010 and in 2011 to map out a course that took the province of Ontario out of the recession and laid a sustainable course back to prosperity, back to a balanced budget, back to a time where Ontarians could look ahead with confidence and with hope, and that's what this, the third in that series of budgets, did. That budget lays out a sustainable, reasonable, achievable path back to a balanced budget.

It did it without gutting public education. It did it without closing hospitals. It did it without firing nurses. It did it without taking away hope from our kids, who said, "Where am I going to go after I'm finished high school? I need to have good post-secondary education spaces." That's why this budget, despite its efforts to climb out of the recession, says to kids who are in high school today, "As you begin to enter university, there will be 60,000 more spaces in Ontario's colleges and universities for you."

It says to people who are in health care, "The health care system that you work in will be there." It says to people who are my age, as most of the MPPs around here are—we're baby-boom-generation people, the first of whom turn 65 in this year of 2011—"As you begin to place your greatest demands of your life on the health care system, we're laying the foundation to make sure that that health care system that you've known was there all your life—it was there when you were healthy; it was there for your children; it was there for your parents; it sustained all of those people around you. But as you enter the latter stages of your life, that health care system is going to be there for you, too, because you need that assurance." Why? Because for all of us who were born in that generation between 1946 and 1966, the first of us turning 65—some of us have already turned 65—

Interjection: Not yet.

Mr. Bob Delaney: My colleague says "Not yet." Not yet for me, too.

But the scary part is that we are now closer to 70 than we are to 40. Before any more of my colleagues disparage me from making veiled assertions that may lead you to suspect what their ages are, I think the important part here is to know that Ontario will make sure that you have a doctor in the last stages of your life. If you are an Ontario doctor and you're looking at retiring yourself, you'll be relieved to know that Ontarians are certifying more doctors, that Ontarians are arranging to certify more foreign-trained doctors, and that if, as a doctor or as a nurse, you're looking at the latter stages of your life and you say, "I'd like to retire and I'd like to know that the health care system that I helped build will still be there for me and for the people around me," that health care system will, courtesy of the budget that Ontario has introduced this year.

It's an encouraging budget. It's a budget that people should look at and say, "It means that the Ontario that I know, the Ontario that I grew up in, the Ontario that I'd

like my children to grow up in, the Ontario that my grandparents and great-grandparents built, that Ontario will still be there, and I'm still going to recognize my province as the years unwind from here. Not only will I recognize it, but our province will gradually reduce our deficit," and personally, I think we're going to get out of this deficit ahead of schedule. That's just my personal feeling. We did it with the last budget deficit that we inherited, and in that, our government can offer to Ontarians this: We have already inherited a budget deficit. We have already eliminated it. We did it ahead of schedule and we did it without destroying the things that you value and cherish as Ontarians.

This is a larger budget deficit. It's going to take a little longer, but we're going to do that, too. We're going to reduce that budget deficit to a balanced budget, and your province will again be in surplus. You won't lose your health care. You won't lose your education. You won't lose the things that you value most. That means a lot to my people who vote for me in Meadowvale, in Lisgar, in Churchill Meadows, in Streetsville. Those are my neighbours and my friends. They ask me, when I go to Queen's Park, "Make sure you remember where you came from." And I say, "I'll remember where I came from because I take the bus beside you, I take the GO train beside you. When all is said and done here, I'm still going to be your neighbour."

This is what this budget lays out to people in the 905 belt; this is what this budget lays out to people in the far north, in our farming country; this is what our budget says to the young and the old; this is what our budget says, even more importantly, to our students, to our entrepreneurs, to our job creators: that the Ontario that you need is at the cutting edge in any way that you need it. We have the most competitive tax regime in North America, and that's good because that helps create jobs. We've got the best health care in North America, and that's good because that helps all of us. We've got the best education system, and one of the best anywhere in the world—we're in the top 10 worldwide, among the overachievers like Finland and Singapore. There are also Ontario public schools, and that's good because that's what we need as time goes forward, because today, the value in your life isn't minerals in the ground or wood in the forest; it's knowledge and it's what you can do with knowledge.

That's the important part about the budget. That's the reason this budget should get passed and that's the reason it should get passed soon. That's why I intend to very proudly stand up and support this budget for this government, and why I will proudly stand up and campaign for re-election as a Liberal, and why I hope to be part of a majority Liberal government in the fall. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Smith has moved government notice of motion number 56. Is it the pleasure of the—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'll speak if there's time left, Madam Speaker. I'll have a word.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): No.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour?

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

I have a deferral slip. "Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on government order 56 be deferred until after question period, April 13."

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Orders of the day?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The minister has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1721.

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Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
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Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
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Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
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McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
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Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
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Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
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Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
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Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
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Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
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Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 13 April 2011

Mercredi 13 avril 2011

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 13 April 2011

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 13 avril 2011

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that the orders for second and third reading of the following private bills shall be called consecutively and the questions on the motions for second and third reading of the bills be put immediately without debate: Bill Pr36, An Act to revive 1314596 Ontario Inc.; Bill Pr40, An Act to revive S.L. McNally Consulting Services Inc.; Bill Pr42, An Act to revive Bahram & Hamid Inc.; Bill Pr43, An Act respecting the Ursuline Religious of the Diocese of London in Ontario; Bill Pr45, An Act to revive 1312510 Ontario Ltd.; that Mr. Leal may move the motions for second and third reading of Bill Pr40 on behalf of Mr. Caplan; and that Mr. Leal may move the motions for second and third reading of Bill Pr45 on behalf of Mr. Dickson.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

1314596 ONTARIO INC. ACT, 2011

Mr. Kormos moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr36, An Act to revive 1314596 Ontario Inc.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

1314596 ONTARIO INC. ACT, 2011

Mr. Kormos moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr36, An Act to revive 1314596 Ontario Inc.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I should indicate that I appreciate the support of my colleagues on both sides of the House this morning.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

S.L. McNALLY CONSULTING SERVICES INC. ACT, 2011

Mr. Leal, on behalf of Mr. Caplan, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr40, An Act to revive S.L. McNally Consulting Services Inc.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I appreciate the co-operation on all sides of the House on this one.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

S.L. McNALLY CONSULTING SERVICES INC. ACT, 2011

Mr. Leal, on behalf of Mr. Caplan, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr40, An Act to revive S.L. McNally Consulting Services Inc.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I appreciate the co-operation from the member from Welland.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

BAHRAM & HAMID INC. ACT, 2011

Mr. Zimmer moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr42, An Act to revive Bahram & Hamid Inc.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

BAHRAM & HAMID INC. ACT, 2011

Mr. Zimmer moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr42, An Act to revive Bahram & Hamid Inc.

Mr. David Zimmer: I must say, I was looking forward to the opportunity to debate this bill at length with the member from Welland, as is his usual wont, but I ex-

pect it's rather early in the morning for even him to fire up the cells of his brain.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Zimmer has moved third reading of Bill Pr42. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

URSULINE RELIGIOUS OF LONDON ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2011

Mr. Hoy moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr43, An Act respecting the Ursuline Religious of the Diocese of London in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

URSULINE RELIGIOUS OF LONDON ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2011

Mr. Hoy moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr43, An Act respecting the Ursuline Religious of the Diocese of London in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

1312510 ONTARIO LTD. ACT, 2011

Mr. Leal, on behalf of Mr. Dickson, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr45, An Act to revive 1312510 Ontario Ltd.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

1312510 ONTARIO LTD. ACT, 2011

Mr. Leal, on behalf of Mr. Dickson, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr45, An Act to revive 1312510 Ontario Ltd.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Orders of the day.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Mr. Speaker, I forgot to wish you a happy pink day earlier today, so, happy pink day.

Government order number 3.

SECURITIES INDUSTRY

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 13, 2010, on the amendment to the motion by Ms. Broten to locate the new common securities regulator in Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak on this very important motion.

Before I talk about the motion, I want to take the opportunity to also highlight that today is international Day of Pink, a day that resolves to fight all forms of bullying, discrimination and harassment. Of course, we don't need a day to stand firm and committed to fight discrimination, to fight homophobia, to fight all sorts of gender-based violence. But it's important to take a day like today and make a statement. I know that a lot of members—in fact, all members—do important work in their communities to ensure that this day is important, and we work with our youth, in particular, in our communities to ensure that we continue to fight discrimination, bullying and harassment.

It is a pleasure for me to speak on this motion. It's been a while since this motion has been debated, so let me take the time to read the motion. It's a short one that was introduced by the finance minister, Mr. Duncan, and it states:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario endorses the need for a strong national securities regulator and endorses the Open Ontario plan to grow our financial services industry by calling on the federal government to recognize Toronto's role as the third-largest financial centre in North America and therefore locate the new common securities regulator in Toronto, where it belongs."

That's what the motion is. In my mind, there is no disputing the sentiments that are expressed in this motion; that is, (1) we need a national securities regulator in Canada, as opposed to the 13 different security regulators that exist right now in all provinces and territories across the country; and (2) that the headquarters, the main office, for this new national securities regulator shall be located in Toronto, because Toronto is the largest financial services centre in all the country. I will speak to both of these very important points.

0910

Having this debate today is also quite valid, because today this issue and the issue around whether or not the federal government has the authority under the Canadian Constitution to create a federal securities regulator is before the Supreme Court of Canada. I believe there are two-day hearings taking place at the Supreme Court, which by the way, as a matter of interest, is located in the great riding of Ottawa Centre; it's a national institution that I'm very much aware of because it's part of my riding.

Lawyers from different provinces and the federal government are arguing this particular issue today at the Supreme Court. I'm also very happy to note that Ontario is part of those proceedings. It's participating as an intervener in support of the creation of a Canada-wide securities regulator.

I think there are a couple of questions that are embedded in this debate that are important to explore. One, I think many people find it surprising that we do not have a national securities regulator, and that in fact what we have in Canada are 13 separate securities regulators, one for each province and then one for each of the three territories, so 13 in total. All those 13 regulators try to work together, but obviously they have different rules and regulations; they have different policies, different guidelines and different priorities. So it does create a bit of a disjointed system across the country.

The important thing to note, again, is that we are perhaps the only jurisdiction in all the industrialized world that has a fragmented system composed of 13 different securities regulators as opposed to one securities regulator. It is important, I would argue, that we resolve that issue. We've got international organizations like the OECD, the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, and the IMF, the International Monetary Fund, that have been arguing for some time that Canada, being such an important player in the capital markets internationally, should have one securities regulator in place. So I think this move is extremely important.

What are the benefits of creating a single national securities regulator? Well, there are a few benefits that I want to highlight. One, it will allow for more consistent protection for investors across Canada. The purpose behind securities regulation is to ensure that investors locally, be it in Ontario or federally, have protection when they're making investments in various instruments, be it corporations, companies or businesses that are publicly traded on the stock exchange, or other financial instruments, many of which we know, like bonds and mutual funds, etc. By having a single regulator, you can have a more consistent set of rules to protect investors across the country, so that we do not have different levels of protection, or lack thereof, from jurisdiction to jurisdiction across the country. I think that is not only good for local, domestic investors but also international investors who are looking into investing in Canada.

The other benefit for having a national securities regulator is more improved regulatory and criminal enforcement to fight securities-related crime. Again, another important aspect of securities regulators like the Ontario Securities Commission is that they are an enforcement agency. Part of their role is to ensure that white-collar-related crimes that deal with securities are properly regulated, and if any rules are being broken, then they are offences that are associated with it. By having, again, a more Canada-wide securities regulator, we get better and improved regulatory and criminal enforcement in terms of any securities-related crimes that may come forward.

Another benefit would be better support for the stability of the Canadian financial system; again, making sure that British Columbia is not doing something different than Alberta, Quebec or Ontario. You have a more consistent, harmonized set of rules that allow for a more stable financial system, especially in today's climate, where we live in a very globalized market economy. We

need to make sure that the rules in Canada are stable in nature; are sending the right message that Canada is open for business, that Canada provides the right level of consistent protection for investors who may be considering investing in our strong economy, in Ontario or anywhere else in Canada.

Another, I think, important aspect to having a harmonized system—or having a uniform system—across the country is a faster policy response to any emerging market trends. This has been a challenge in that, as the economies develop, as the financial services sector develops, you want to be able to respond at a faster pace, especially in today's world where, with all the technologies at hand, things do move fast. By having a national securities regulator, again, we're looking at a more consistent policy approach in terms of dealing with any emerging market issues.

Another good benefit, I would argue—if there is such a thing as a bad benefit—is simpler processes for businesses when it comes to their interaction with the securities regulator. Again, if you're looking at a large company which may be doing business in various jurisdictions, they may have to deal with two or more of the securities regulators: different sets of rules and different processes, which makes the whole process quite cumbersome for those businesses as well.

Then there's the element of cost for the investor, because the more regulatory agencies you are dealing with, the more costs you will incur as an investor. By having one more streamlined securities regulator, I think one is looking at simpler processes for business and a lower cost for investors as well, giving them more opportunity to invest that money and grow our economy and create jobs.

Lastly, I would argue that on an international front, by having a national securities regulator what we are talking about is more effective international representation and influence for Canada. As I mentioned, there's OECD and IMF, to name a few organizations out there which deal with issues at a national level on securities matters. Having one consistent voice on behalf of Canada would give more weight to Canada's voice, as opposed to the disparate voices that exist across the country.

A lot of work has gone on on this issue, as I mentioned, which is all being accumulated into—I believe it's a reference before the Supreme Court of Canada. It's being heard today and tomorrow.

0920

One of the works that took place on this particular issue was that the government of Canada, in 2008, appointed an expert panel on securities regulation. The idea was for that expert panel to provide the government advice and recommendations on securities regulation in Canada. They highlighted three key challenges with the existing structure. Again, that is 13 different securities regulators across the country.

The first one—the obvious one, I would argue—was that we have a fragmented structure in place. It makes it difficult for Canadian securities regulators to react

quickly and decisively to capital market events. I mentioned earlier the fact that we have 13 securities regulators of various sizes, Ontario of course being one of the largest ones, because we are the hub for financial service markets in Canada. It is difficult to make quick decisions. It is difficult to react in an expedient manner to issues that may be developing in terms of the financial services market. That fragmented structure was identified by the expert panel as a challenge for our regulators.

Another concern that was expressed by the panel was that the provincial mandates are incongruent with the national reforms required to address development in capital markets—that could be national or international in scope. Again, as things develop—and I think the last recession was a good example of a situation where there was quite serious turmoil in the financial services market. We saw banks in the United States collapsing. There was a lot of conversation that took place at the international level to ensure that our securities regulators are able to respond. Those types of situations are difficult to deal with in the structure that exists today.

Lastly, one of the concerns the expert panel reported was around how the current structure misallocates resources, causing securities regulation to be less efficient and effective—another challenge because, again, we have 13 separate regulators across the country spending their resources on doing pretty much the same thing, when we could bring them all together, put one regulator in place and get things done. That's the issue around the need for having a single securities regulator.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And that's enough.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: No, Mr. Marchese, I have a few more things to say. I think this is an important issue, and I very much support having a national securities regulator.

The second issue, which I think which we should all be supporting in this Legislature, is that the headquarters for this securities regulator should be based in Toronto. I think we will all agree that Toronto is the capital of the financial services sector in all of Canada. There is no disagreement—there should be no disagreement—about that. In fact, Toronto is the third-largest financial centre in all of North America. That is very significant as well. It only makes sense that when we are creating a national securities regulator, the headquarters, the regulator, be located here in Toronto, because in the world globally, when we're talking about the financial services market, all investors automatically think of Toronto as the place to go.

I think it will send a very good signal to all investors across the world that Toronto is where the national securities regulator is, and I think it will instill confidence in those investors in terms of investing in Canada. We also know that Toronto is home to the 13 largest banks in North America by market capitalization, and is, as I mentioned, the third-largest financial sector in North America, behind only New York and Chicago, which gives further credence that this securities regulator should be located here.

The point, I think, is that if there is homework for all of us to do, it is that we need to put pressure on federal members of Parliament from Ontario to advocate that Toronto should be the place for the national securities regulator. I think all of us need to make sure, and this election is an apt opportunity for us to take that message home. I really urge the members of the official opposition as well to talk to the Conservative members coming out of Ontario, and perhaps other Conservative members from other parts of the country, that Toronto should be the home for the national capital securities regulator. It does not make sense at all that it be located anywhere else.

So my plea to everyone is that this is an issue where we are meeting individually with candidates who are seeking office right now to be members of Parliament, and then those who will be fortunate to be elected on May 2; that we sit down with them and have this issue on the top of our priority list, so that when they are back in the House of Commons, this issue is raised.

I ask my Liberal colleagues and I'll ask my Conservative and NDP colleagues to take this issue because I think it is an important one. It means jobs for our communities; it means more prosperity for our communities; it ensures that Ontario remains at the forefront when it comes to attracting new capital investment dollars. And Toronto is ready to meet those needs. Toronto is ready to serve all of the country as the head office for the national securities regulator.

Speaker, thank you very much for giving me an opportunity to speak on this very important issue. I really hope that all members take my plea seriously in terms of speaking with their federal counterparts, ensuring that this issue remains at the forefront and that Toronto is chosen as the place to locate the national securities regulator, because this is where the action is taking place. This is what the global players around the world know, where the capital of the financial services market is, and that's in Toronto. I think it is our collective responsibility that we ensure that that decision is made appropriately by the federal government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I just would want to indicate at this time that I will be sharing my time with the member from Burlington and the member from Cambridge.

First of all, I want to indicate here that obviously we in the official opposition do support the notion of the important role and the argument for Toronto as the home of the national securities regulator. I think that while others have indicated certain specific areas of the reasons for the—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for York-Simcoe, I'm advised that you have already spoken on this motion, so I'll go to the member—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Well, it's some time since we've debated it—I think it's about a year—so it's reasonable that someone would forget.

The member for Burlington.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: How desperate is this government, regurgitating something that was introduced on March 22, 2010, that people have even forgotten whether they have spoken to the darned thing or not? An honest mistake, but shame on the government. If this were so important, as the member from Ottawa Centre has stated, and so urgent, why are we discussing this over a year after it was introduced? My gosh. This makes no sense to me whatsoever, and it was a complete surprise to all of us when this was introduced as the debate this morning. Again, shame on the government: desperate—totally desperate—to keep us here and talk about something. You know what? The member from Ottawa Centre said, “We wanted to keep this in the forefront.” Keeping this in the forefront over a year after introducing it makes no sense at all.

0930

I understand completely the importance of recognizing the financial services sector in Toronto as being the capital of our financial services sector here in Canada. I completely recognize that, and I value that, but I think that it was unfortunate, regrettable, that the government had to slip their Open Ontario plan into the recommendation to keep this as Canada's financial capital, because it was a bit of a trick to try to get folks who did not endorse the plan to endorse it or vote against Toronto being Canada's financial sector capital.

What is that about? Are you so desperate that your legislation and your plans and your policies can't stand on their own that you've got to interweave them into something that makes it difficult for the opposition to oppose? Well, I won't be supporting the plan if it includes the statement that endorses the Open Ontario plan, because I did not support that.

In fact, in the whole 20 minutes that the member from Ottawa Centre spoke, he not once—not once—mentioned that, as part of this recommendation, the Open Ontario plan was included in the wording of that recommendation. So obviously it wasn't as important as the government thought, but they did just slip it in there so that it made it difficult for the opposition. Again, shame on the government.

The city of Toronto is a busy place; it's a bustling place. It's had its ups and downs, but it's a very proud city with a great, great history. One part of its great history is the fact that it has grown into the financial services capital of Canada. It's home to the headquarters of five of the major banks. It has thousands of employees—growing yearly—who work in the sector. We have the headquarters of about 80% of the foreign banks that operate in Canada right here in Toronto: a proud, proud moment for this city. The Toronto Stock Exchange is the largest stock exchange in Canada. There are almost 2,000 financial firms right here in this city, and that's great.

I would love to support this recommendation. However, by slipping in endorsement of the Open Ontario plan, it makes it impossible for me to support this. If we could divide the recommendation to be able to support

part of it, that would be great, but this Legislature doesn't allow that to happen, and that's unfortunate.

The employment in this sector has grown considerably in the last few years, and it continues to grow. Even with the recessions that have occurred, the troubles in the world economy, this city continues to keep its mark on that world stage by proving itself to be a strong and viable place to do business. There are now upwards of 130,000 folks employed in this sector. It would be a darned shame if anything happened to make that change. People are depending on this city—they have grown around the sector in this city and in the GTA—to contribute to a productive, wonderful economy in our country, and I would hope that that remains.

It's been my pleasure to speak to this. It's my disappointment that it was brought forward this way, as a complete surprise, after over a year of sitting somewhere on somebody's desk. My concern is that the member from Ottawa Centre did not make enough points that gave me any consideration to be able to support this recommendation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Cambridge.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: This government has sat on its hands for seven long years with one of the most important problems that we have in Canada, and that is the credibility of the Toronto stock market for this great nation. This government has starved the funding of the Ontario Securities Commission. It has refused the funding and prevented the commission from doing its job.

The commission was before a committee which I sat on over two years ago, and it pleaded with the committee and the government to increase the funding. They told us about the problem that, where they had a jurisdiction which in effect covers the whole of Canada, wrongdoers outside of the province and inside of the province—investigations were impossible because of the lack of funding. The police departments are busy doing other things also, so their co-operation is not always there, and certainly police departments outside of Ontario are not really interested in assisting the securities commission.

What happens? A gold company—an individual, the president—discovered gold in China. It happened within the last five years. Well, that's great. The announcements took place, and periodically announcements were made about the cores being drilled and the gold being found. The whole thing was a fraud. It happened right here, not more than two years ago.

The individual involved has never been prosecuted. He's not here in Ontario. I don't even know whether an investigation has been done, but there is no ramification. Right now in Canada, you just ensure that you're not within Ontario—and even then you may be safe. But if you're outside of Ontario, you're perfectly safe to defraud the public.

This government for seven years has sat on its hands and done absolutely nothing, and all of a sudden it's concerned that it may lose a federal regulator. Where are they going to go? They're going to go west, of course.

The power is slowly shifting. Oil, potash—the west is reborn. We have the stock exchange now. Is it possible that an exchange commission could be seized in Alberta or Saskatchewan or BC? Why not? I've warned this government in a minority report over two years ago that that was a possibility, and it still is.

It's really a shame that this government has ignored the pleas of the Ontario Securities Commission for greater funding to permit them to do their job. It's a sad tale when other provinces look at us, and we have the stock exchange located in our great city of Toronto, and yet it is not governed properly, through no fault of our commission—our present commission—but through the fault of this government and its lack of funding.

I really get concerned about Ontario, this government and what the rest of this great country thinks of what's going on in this province.

Mr. John O'Toole: Alberta. Go to the Alberta line.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: In the province of Alberta, the newspaper the Calgary Herald wants to talk about Ontario. This is its picture of Ontario: "In a bold move, an Ontario teachers' union has signalled its intent to buy a provincial government." That is the byline in the April 8, 2011, newspaper dealing with the Catholic teachers' union's attempt to raise money to circumvent the morality of the situation. They found a loophole in the law, they believe, that permits them to in effect buy this government, buy any government in Ontario, through their support, circumventing our present laws dealing with elections and the restraints that we all properly live with in elections. We can only spend so much as a party. There's an equality there, there's a fairness there, and that is being broken.

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We want to have the federal securities commission remain in Ontario. Places like Calgary are looking at Ontario and saying, "It's a banana republic." What happened to the great Ontario that was revered, not just in Canada but throughout the world, the economic engine of this great country? What has happened to this province in the hands of this government? We're a lot poorer. Our image in the world has degraded, and some consider us a banana republic. A government, any government in Ontario, can be bought. I say no, there is no possibility of that happening. However, we are losing, somewhat, the public image; we're losing our perception of integrity—and I believe there is great integrity in this Legislature.

We're losing part of the battle, so even if we have—and over two years ago, in a minority report, we insisted that this government move and that it do something in encouraging a federal commission. Down in the United States of America, they have the SEC. When you mention the Securities and Exchange Commission in the United States of America, people listen, because they're terrified of that commission. They know its awesome power; they know that it's well-funded for investigations, and they listen. The latest famous prosecution was that of Mr. Black.

When you mention the Ontario Securities Commission to anybody outside of Ontario, there's no concern there.

They know that they are underfunded; they know that they will get no assistance from anyone outside the province to do their investigations. Inside Ontario, we know that too. They're like Rodney Dangerfield: They get no respect from the markets, through no fault of theirs. I listened very carefully for almost a full day when they recited the problems that they have. They've got problems getting the co-operation of the police, they've got problems in underfunding and they haven't got sufficiency in the way of regulators.

I can see that this government wants to get rid of the problem, get rid of the funding, and put it into federal hands. I'm in favour of that, because this government is doing such a poor job of regulating our stock exchange right now, permitting, as I mentioned when I started, a gold company to issue false core specimens, to do it on a number of occasions, and when the truth was finally out that it was all falsified, there was no prosecution of one person. There's got to be something strangely wrong with Ontario today. If you get caught stealing a loaf of bread, there's a possibility that you will be prosecuted and that you will have a fine or even spend a night—admittedly, not a long time—in jail. But if you steal \$1 million in our Ontario through white-collar crime, you walk away free and get to keep your money, your ill-gotten gains. There's something wrong with the system. There's something wrong with a government that looks the other way when this is happening.

I certainly would support the motion if it dealt with the transfer of power to a federal commission. That is the right thing to do. I said that over two years ago in a minority report, and I repeat it. To foul the nest, so to speak, by throwing in some mumbo-jumbo that some spin doctor in the Premier's office has figured out will sell this government; by throwing in some words that no one really knows what they're about, is really a sad tale. Does it mean that this government is not serious in supporting a federal commission, or does it mean that they're so desperate that they can only spin, rather than really deal with the real issues that this province has to face in the years ahead for the benefit of all?

So, though I support the intent, I have a great difficulty. We have proposed a motion which would clarify it and remove the spin, remove the election platform promises, and just deal with the request of the federal government—and the strong request, I hope—that a federal-jurisdiction commission to govern the stock exchange be, at long last, instituted across this great country.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Living in Toronto and living in Ontario is a huge privilege. We in the Liberal Party love this province. We are extraordinarily proud of the sacrifices that farmers, bankers, labourers and teachers have made to do that.

I'm very proud to be the member for Toronto Centre. I am very proud to be the member for a large part of Toronto's financial services.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Bring back George Smitherman.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Yes, George Smitherman would be a great person to bring back, to my friend from Nepean—Carleton. Maybe in your seat. It would be a major improvement.

It's fascinating to me—the member for Cambridge clearly doesn't have much regard for this province. To refer to Ontario as a banana republic is one of the most offensive—I can't find parliamentary language to describe how ridiculous it is, coming from the Monty Pythonesque antics of the party. Some 80% of people don't have a stable banking system and they don't have a stable democracy, and they came here to Ontario because we have a stable democracy, a stable financial system and a democratic, civil-based society.

How do you run for office and attack bankers? Mr. Drummond, a life of public service—we're very fortunate to have five of the 10 largest banks in North America headquartered in our province, of 13 banks. Referring to Mr. Drummond as some Bay Street banker, as if those people are unimportant and have nothing to contribute—well, having been mayor of a city that didn't have any banks, when there were days when Halifax, Montreal, London, Toronto and Winnipeg all had bank head offices, now, essentially, we're the only city with a bank head office, which is why we should have a securities commission here.

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But the party opposite is absolutely offensive. The member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, only a few months ago, was suggesting that Toronto separate from the province of Ontario. I spent my adolescence milking cows in Alexandria, and I understand, and this party understands, that we need the pools of capital, that there are very few cities that have the large pools of capital that banks—because farmers need them, and cities need farmers. But this is typical of the party opposite's divisive politics. They want to set farmers up—"Every farmer doesn't understand." They treat them like they're backward bumpkins, and then they treat bankers like they're some city slickers who are trying to take advantage of everyone who doesn't live in Toronto. This incredibly offensive view of this province is exactly why I don't think those people across the way are fit to govern.

It seems to me that this is so obvious. In Winnipeg, they have the wheat board because Winnipeg is the wheat capital of Canada. I'm very proud to have grown up in Montreal, and I saw the financial system collapse there and relocate to Ontario. When you live in any other part of the country, you understand that when you have the banking industry, you have some of the higher salaries; you have the capital necessary for innovation in businesses; you have the capital necessary for agri-business; you have the capital necessary for manufacturing.

We only have a banking system here because of the people in northern Ontario, quite frankly, like my friend Bill Mauro, because it is the financing of mining and resource extraction that brought banking here originally. We are the largest banking centre in the world right now for minerals and those kinds of resources, and we're very

proud of that, because we understand that the banks serve northern Ontario and Toronto wouldn't have the competitive advantage if northern Ontario, for example, weren't part of Ontario. But you've never heard anyone on this side of the House suggest that we carve the province up in little pieces.

Finally, it seems to me that we are living in a much more competitive world. We compete with London, Chicago and New York. The Open Ontario plan is attached to this motion for a very good reason: It drives an entire agenda of incentives and assistance for the formulation of risk capital; it works toward a strategy to build our financial services, of which having the securities regulator here is a critical part.

We are proud of bankers. We see bankers as an important part of our economy. We do not berate them, because if they ever picked up and left for Calgary or for Winnipeg or for Montreal, we would be a much lesser province. Look at who gives money to the arts and anti-poverty. Look at the \$400-million addition to the Sick Kids hospital research centre. Do you think we could build that if we didn't have banking and financial services here?

If only my friend from Cambridge and my friend from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, who like to take shots at everyone who lives in urban Canada and drive those wedges, would talk to their federal cousins—because we have a petro dollar in this country, not an innovation dollar, not a manufacturing dollar and not an agri-dollar. And why is that? Because the most subsidized industry is not our Green Energy Act, which they love to chastise us about; it's their federal cousins. You put a dollar into the oil sands and you get a tax writeoff from the federal government of 42.5 cents. We have to compete now with a higher dollar than they had when they were in power. We're more successful in recovering, and that's extraordinary.

We live with a government, federally, that understands oil and doesn't understand banking and doesn't stand up for our financial services sector. That, to me, is just sad, given how many members from the party opposite sit in the federal Parliament.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: What's actually sad is that this government, this Liberal government, will put this on the table today after it has not been discussed for almost an entire year, if it has not been—yes, it has been an entire year. It was introduced on March 22, 2010. Why is it appearing now? Because this government, this Liberal government, wants to inject itself into a federal election. They saw yesterday that their hero, Mr. Ignatieff, couldn't win a federal debate, so we have to bring this up to talk about something to intervene in a federal election.

But let me tell you something. The members on this side of the House, in the official opposition, have been very clear that we support a national securities regulator housed in Toronto. We have been very clear about that. We have been very clear about that since the government

agencies committee actually brought in the Ontario Securities Commission to talk about what they're doing and did a review of the entire agency. At that time, we echoed exactly what the federal finance minister, Jim Flaherty, was saying in his budget a few years ago.

Let's not forget that Jim Flaherty is the architect of this idea, who believes that there should be a national securities regulator. He was the first finance minister in this country to actually put that in a budget, and guess what? Not only was the member from Durham at that budget, not only was the member from Whitby—Oshawa at that budget, but I too sat there to watch the finance minister of the day—who, I imagine, in a few weeks will remain Canada's finance minister—bring that to the floor of the House of Commons.

The question here today is not whether people support Toronto as the economic centre of this nation; the question here today is, why did they have to hide the title of their throne speech in this motion? That is the question. They are trying to force people into either voting for something that we don't support, which is their Open Ontario initiative, or to vote against it, to suggest and imply that members of this side of the House don't recognize Toronto as the economic and financial capital of this province and this country. And we do; I want to be very, very clear with you and with the folks who are at home that the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party and our caucus, under the leadership of Tim Hudak, supports this notion of a national securities regulator, but also that we support its headquarters here in the province of Ontario.

At the time, I had asked Mr. Wilson, who was a previous head of the OSC, a lot of different questions about how a national securities regulator would actually impact the OSC and where those folks would find jobs, and he was very much in favour at the time. We, of course, now have a new head of the securities regulator, Mr. Wetston. My colleague here from Oxford was there when we brought him in, and I believe he was endorsed by our government agencies committee.

But the reality is that the heart of this resolution, as my colleague from Burlington said, is trickery. They're trying to trick people. And why are they bringing it up over a year later? It can't be that much of a priority for them, other than to get engaged in this federal election, which I think demeans this House. There's no point in trying to intervene in an election which these federal parties are now engaged in.

We can all take our own personal views outside this chamber and into our constituencies, should we so choose, and I often do. I'm a big advocate for that. After all, we are in a democracy. But using this Legislature for a wedge issue like this or a wedge resolution is despicable, and quite frankly, I think it's beneath the government of the day.

They actually had an opportunity a year ago to debate this, which was, I believe, timely. It was not too long after Mr. Flaherty brought forward this resolution into his budget in the Parliament of Canada, and so we ask now why—why, why, why is this being debated in the middle of a federal election?

Are we going to be expecting Dwight Duncan, the finance minister of the day, to do what he said on the day of the election, which is to get involved in the federal election? He'll go out helping his Liberal counterparts. I have no problem with that, but just don't use your budget and don't use this motion to try and divide and conquer Ontarians and Canadians. That's wrong. This government should be well above that and well above reproach. Unfortunately, they aren't.

My colleagues have spoken on this bill, I think, because we are so offended that the government of the day has tried to trick Ontarians and Canadians. They must imagine us all for fools, but I can assure you, we aren't. Of course, on October 6, 2011, we will indeed show them who needs change in this province; I suspect that will come very quickly.

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My colleague Peter Shurman, who is our economic development critic, has spoken quite at length. He's also a member from the GTA, from Thornhill, and he talked about some of the positives that are in favour of Toronto and what the record is. I thought it was really interesting, in reading his speech earlier this morning, some of the things he pointed out.

Toronto is the heart, as we all know, of Canada's financial services sector. It's home to five of Canada's largest domestic banks, 55 foreign bank subsidiaries and branches, and 119 securities firms. Right now, you can count those groups like Manulife and Sun Life among two of the top 10 life insurers worldwide as residents in this city. The TMX Group, commonly known as the Toronto Stock Exchange, has its headquarters here. We also have the operations of seven of the top 10 largest global hedge fund administrators. He also tells us that the city of Toronto is the largest Wi-Fi zone in Canada.

Coming from Ottawa, obviously we like to champion our city, and I'm very proud of that. It's also the home of our nation's capital; the federal seat of Parliament resides in the city that I represent. However, those of us from this province champion not only our nation's capital but also our financial and provincial capital.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that you're engaged in this conversation that is going on beside me, but it's fine. They're actually just whispering what I should be saying; right?

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: No, no?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Just trying to be of assistance.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: They're trying to be of assistance.

My colleague from Durham has noted, and I believe the member from Cambridge quite elegantly noted, the importance of Toronto, but also that this government is not being fair with the people in bringing this motion forward. It's so timely for them. If you wanted to get involved in a federal election by using this chamber—which they've already done by using their budget—then this would be a perfect time for it.

I look at what's happening in Peterborough with my friend Dean Del Mastro, and what may happen there on

October 6. We're looking forward to change in Ontario and being able to work with the federal government, instead of seeing this particular chamber always pick a fight with our federal government, which will be returned, of course, on May 2.

I just want to talk a little bit more about the mutual fund industry. Of course, they were hard hit, as many of you will know, through the HST. I worked with many of those mutual fund companies that were telling us that this was going to be an extra tax on people who were trying to save for their retirement. The Mackenzie Financial report estimated that the cost of the HST for a \$100,000 portfolio would be almost \$2,500 over the course of 10 years. On larger portfolios, that would be much more.

Why do I bring that up? Because the mutual fund industry, as I mentioned earlier, is very large here in Toronto. If the government of this day, this Liberal government, chose to actually be supportive of the financial services sector here in Ontario, they would have listened to people from Mackenzie Financial, CI Financial and other groups that were here and spoke on many occasions to the Minister of Finance, but also to committee.

I remember, when the HST was being brought in, that young stockbrokers and young mutual fund agents would be in the galleries up there, because they knew how much this was going to tax not only their own industry but certainly the people they represent. They didn't think it was fair that somebody who was working hard, playing by the rules and saving was going to lose about \$2,500 in extra taxes after they had been saving.

So again, if you think this is a government that actually feels compelled to support the Toronto financial sector, you have to think again, and you have to consider what their motivations are for bringing this forward. They're bringing it forward well after they've entrenched the HST into law. It's a \$3-billion tax grab that comes from middle-income families, many of whom have been hit with very high hydro rates and high gas prices and a plethora of other increases to the cost of living. That's a motivation. They wanted to hide this bill so that we couldn't talk about it at that particular time.

The other motivation is that they clearly would like to get engaged in the federal government election that is occurring right now. By all accounts, as proud Ontarians, we all know that this is a very important province in the federal election landscape, and of course they want to use and abuse their powers in this chamber to force an outcome.

I can tell you, though, I think that Ontario voters won't be fooled by them; they refuse to be fooled by them, and I think they're going to show up in numbers and disregard these political games my colleagues opposite are playing right now. I'll continue, as do my colleagues in the chamber on the opposition side, to support a national securities regulator, but more than that, support its location in Toronto.

There are a number of outlying issues, and I believe my colleague from Cambridge mentioned them earlier in debate. We were talking about other provinces not exact-

ly being engaged in this process or actually pushing back; they're not completely supportive of a national securities regulator. I think that's when we ought to be assisting, as a chamber, that message.

I guess the question then comes back to the government. You can put forward this little fluffy motion that really doesn't mean anything because, again, it's not binding. If they really supported this, here's what I would do—and this is some free advice to this government. I'm happy to give them free advice. If they were very serious about a national securities regulator and they were serious about housing it in the city of Toronto, this is what I would do: I would pick up the phone and I would call every finance minister in Canada and encourage them to get to the table, to buy into this—that means Quebec, Alberta, the Maritimes and other provinces—to ensure that they know the value of hosting a national securities regulator not only in Canada but specifically right here in the city of Toronto.

I would be investing my efforts and energy to bring those finance ministers from across Canada to this provincial capital, but also to Canada's financial capital, and I would do that with the federal finance minister. But you're not going to find them doing that, because it's just not their style. They would rather put forward this flimsy, four-line motion that means absolutely nothing, with the exception of trying to wedge the opposition against the financial services sector and the folks of Toronto and trying to engage in a political campaign that we're not actually engaged in here in this chamber.

That is what is so offensive to us on this side of the House. If they were serious and they really wanted to support a national securities regulator, there are lots of ways to do it. This motion is not how you do it. In fact, this motion actually speaks against exactly what they want to do because they're using it as a political tool, but that's what they do.

When you have no ideas of your own, what do you do? You fight with Ottawa. I knew that when I was a young person working on Parliament Hill. You would always know that when you're in trouble at home, the provinces would pick a fight with the federal government.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Yes, they try that.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Of course, this government does it all the time.

My colleague right here from Oxford is a prime example. As our critic for agriculture, he has been standing up for farmers and he has been working with our federal counterparts. He is responsible for the risk management program in this province that was in the last budget because of hard work and the credibility he has with farmers across this province. At the last minute, this crowd across the way decides they're going to get engaged when they don't have to do a payout. Is that not right?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Exactly, exactly. No payout this year, so out comes the announcement.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: They don't have to do a payout, so they decide they're going to minimally support that

program. But I can tell you something: The member from Oxford understands how to get things done and the member from Oxford understands—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'd like to hear the speaker who has the floor, so we'll have some order, please.

The member for Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

Again, as I said, my colleague from Oxford knows how to get things done.

Do you know what the most frustrating thing in this House is? It's when this Legislature will go into a full rant and we'll have a minister opposite completely blow a gasket. Why are they blowing a gasket? Because they're in trouble, and they say, "Call your federal cousins." That's hilarious. Can't they do their job? Can't they actually represent the province? No, they can't because they're so focused on the small stuff, on the little stuff, on the things that aren't going to matter and playing little games.

But I can tell you something: It's about to come to an end. They've got less than six months over there. It's going to be a long, long road, the next six months, for them. I look at my friend from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock. It's got to be tough for him to know that in another five or six months he'll be retired from this place and we'll be bringing, of course, our friend Laurie Scott back.

I look across the way at some of the other friends who are going to be leaving. The reality is, I wish them well. I hope, when they leave this place, that they'll take with them the fond memories we've all had here.

But I'm looking forward, of course, to continuing this debate to talk about a national securities regulator for Toronto, because as I said, this party clearly supports this. We have been on the record as supporting this. In fact, during those exact debates I was talking about earlier with my colleague from Oxford at government agencies, I believe our leader actually participated in some of those hearings, as our finance critic previously. So it was great.

I hear a lot of talk about Gerry Ritz, and I can tell you—here's a little story, actually. We have some time in the morning. I was talking to Gerry Ritz a couple weeks ago, maybe a month ago, about agriculture. He was very well received in my suburban rural community. And do you know what he said? He said, "Lisa, we need to get that agriculture minister in Ontario to start working with us." Do you know what he said?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Nepean—Carleton, what we need to do is get back on the subject of the resolution.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Here's the subject, though, because it does play into interprovincial and intergovernmental affairs.

So he says to me, "We need to start working with that agriculture minister of yours." I said, "You know what, Minister Ritz? You're right." And this is what he said.

He said, "Yeah, you tell him to give me a call." The federal Minister of Agriculture had no idea who the agriculture minister was in Ontario—two consecutive ministers who were females. But they don't do anything. They're so ineffective they're not picking up the phone.

It goes to the heart of this legislation that's before us. It speaks exactly to this legislation before us. It says they won't work with their federal counterparts, that they'll only complain about them in this Legislature and that they'll try to play partisan political games, but they won't pick up the phone to do what needs to be done. Whether that is calling their federal counterparts or—in this case, they should also be calling not only their federal counterparts but every single finance minister in this country. But they won't do it and they don't do it, and we continue to debate silly little non-binding resolutions here and listen to the Backstreet Boys over in the corner heckle as the legislators here on the opposition side want to be committed to actually seeing a financial services regulator here in the city of Toronto. We could be no more disturbed by this legislation than we are at most things that they do.

But again, I go back to the fact that the Ontario Progressive Conservatives support a national securities regulator in the province of Ontario. We support its location in the city of Toronto. We are going to continue to support that, but we will not support this legislation. We will not allow the Liberal Party of Ontario to put us into a corner. We will not allow them to divide us through wedge politics. We will make sure that when we form government on October 6, 2011, we push this idea forward and that we work with our federal counterparts to ensure it will happen.

In the short moment I have left, I want to continue to support my colleague from Oxford, again, for doing what no one on that side could do, and that is bring forward a risk management strategy. Because here is the heart of things: As somebody who represents a suburban/rural riding, a risk management strategy for Ontario is important, as is the Toronto national securities regulator in this province. I will continue to champion that. I will continue to support my colleague from Oxford.

I've enjoyed this opportunity to debate. Thank you very much.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 8, this House is in recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I want to introduce Trevor Jones, who is the grandfather of page Emma Redfearn. He's here and, I'm sure, very proud of what she's doing here.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Please welcome, in the west members' gallery, Josie and Louis Tonazzo. They're

visiting from Sault Ste. Marie, visiting their daughter Stephanie Veitch and family in Stouffville, in the great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'd like to introduce to the House Julia Hawthorthwaite, who is visiting us today. She's currently interning in the environmental programs division at the Ministry of the Environment. Julia is in her fourth year studying environmental studies at the University of Waterloo. I just want to take this opportunity to thank Julia and the 50 other interns at MOE for all the hard work they do to make sure that our environment is protected.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to introduce, in the east members' gallery, some members of the Oakville provincial youth advisory committee who are visiting Queen's Park today. We've got Alex McKeen, Conor Lewis, Steven Rai, Tori Lang, Christine Rankin, Ronnie Allen, former page Natalie LaMarche, and Ellen Bushnik from my staff.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I'm delighted to introduce to you His Excellency the consul general of the Republic of Croatia, Mr. Ljubinko Matešić. He's going to report back on what he hears today to his country. Congratulations, and welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome, consul general.

ORAL QUESTIONS

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is for the Premier. Premier, yesterday you got caught using taxpayer dollars to pay for enhanced cable packages for prisoners, enhanced cable packages that are unaffordable for many Ontario families. But it goes further than that.

Let me tell you about your bizarre priorities when it comes to victims of crime and criminals. Kellie Smith's son was brutally murdered. Kellie had to choose between paying the rent or paying for her son's funeral. She applied to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board for help over a year ago and is still waiting for an answer. But according to FOI requests received by the Ontario PC caucus, somehow, Premier, you found money to pay for prisoners to take "freeing the human spirit" yoga classes developed by a Zen master. Premier, why are you putting the priorities of criminals ahead of victims of crime?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to remind my honourable colleague—and I would ask that he acknowledge—that we have, in fact, on the matter of this cable-vision, put an end to a practice that was begun under the former Conservative government. I think it would be important that he acknowledge that so that Ontarians gain a full appreciation of the foundation of fact on this particular issue.

I think as well that my honourable colleague will acknowledge that we have moved in a number of different

directions to enhance public safety in our province, whether that's investing in more police officers on our streets, whether it's investing in new, modern jails that better protect the public or a number of other areas.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Those answers simply don't cut it for women like Kellie who have to deal with these tragic circumstances. Not only did she find out that you are paying for enhanced cable packages for prisoners, but you're paying for 90-minute yoga and meditation classes for prisoners, and you are as well paying for creative writing workshops for prisoners. FOI records obtained by the Ontario PC caucus say the workshops "offer writing as a cathartic method of clarifying feelings." Contrast that with Kellie Smith, who has no catharsis for the stress that she lives with while waiting for money to help to pay for student loans and bills that are in arrears because she spent everything she had to pay for the funeral of her murdered son.

Premier, how did you get so out of touch with these warped priorities?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Although I won't speak to an individual case—and my friend will always take up individual cases—we all stand for the rights of victims and their families. We all stand for a system that supports victims and their families.

In this part of the House we're investing twice as much in victims and victim-related services as that side of the House ever did. We've invested almost three quarters of a billion dollars in these services, and constantly look for better. We got advice that the CICB should not only be continued but that we should deal with the backlog which it accumulated over many years.

We've dealt with the backlog, but it's also an adjudicative system, meaning that there is a hearing, meaning that you have to gather documents and meaning that it sometimes takes a while. It's a lot faster than it ever was under the previous party, and we're continuing to do it as fast as we can, but it is a process that takes a little while to deal with all the needs and the rights of victims.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Premier, you had no hesitation in paying for enhanced cable packages for prisoners, for paying for, "freeing the human spirit" yoga classes for prisoners or for paying for cathartic creative writing classes for prisoners. It shows how deeply out of touch you've become that you put the criminals ahead of victims of crime like Kellie.

It's not just Kellie Smith. The minister blithely says, "Oh, you pick cases out of the air." Minister, real people like Kellie Smith, like Liz Hoage, like Donna Dixon, Wendy Flanagan and Claudette Lalonde, all came to you about not only the tragic loss but the murder of their children, and they were told to wait for sometimes years on end while you pay for yoga classes, creative writing and cable packages for prisoners.

How did you get so dramatically out of touch to put the rights of criminals ahead of crime victims?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The fact of the matter is that we're not. We're doing just the opposite. My friend opposite does not want to remember his past. When did the cable programs come in? Under them. What channel has he been watching? Because they were funding all of those channels. All of the creative programs he talks about were under him. They started it; we stopped it.

It's a typical theme. A CICB that was not getting the funding it needed under them; a Criminal Injuries Compensation Board that is getting the funding under us. A victims' justice fund that was accumulating a big surplus under them; a victims' justice fund that's spending the funds under us for the benefits of victims.

He stands and speaks for people, but did nothing. We stand and speak for people and actually protect victims, the services they need and the people who need our assistance.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Premier, our FOI requests, which your government tried to delay as long as possible, reveal how you're spending taxpayer dollars and putting criminals' rights ahead of those of victims. You have something called the Brain Gym program. You have enhanced yoga classes freeing the human spirit and cathartic creative writing classes.

Why don't you explain that to Wendy Flanagan? Wendy Flanagan was told by your government, through the compensation board, that they wouldn't pay her support claim because she didn't actually see her daughter get murdered and then dismembered. But you pay for criminals to free their human spirit in 90-minute yoga classes designed by a Zen master.

Premier, this is dramatically out of touch. How do you explain to women like Wendy Flanagan, who didn't get compensation because she didn't see the murder of her daughter, that you're paying for these outrageous abuses like yoga classes for prisoners?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community Safety.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Of course, what the Leader of the Opposition fails to say is that these programs that are in place were programs which, by and large, were initiated by the previous government, the Conservative government.

I wasn't being particularly critical of them at the time. I know that they've evaluated the programs. Some of these programs are delivered by volunteers. I know that the Salvation Army comes in. I know that representatives of the various churches work with those who are inmates within the system. I know that there are a number of organizations, which are volunteer organizations, charitable organizations and religious organizations, which work with inmates within the system.

What has happened with the premium cable TV is that in many instances, your government brought it in. Our government is now taking it out.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

1040

Mr. Tim Hudak: Let's face the facts, Minister. The only reason you were forced to act is because you got caught; you got caught and were forced to act. But real people like Liz Hoage, like Wendy Flanagan, like Claudette Lalonde, who was denied support and told it was because she wasn't actually there to witness the murder of her son Corey—the same goes for Kellie Smith, who wonders what parent would just stand there and watch their kid being murdered. These women face this experience under the McGuinty government. Simply because they did not witness the murder of their own children, you turn them away and spend on frills like this for the very criminals in prisons in our province.

Why don't you get your priorities straight and act for these mothers instead of coddling the prisoners in our jails in Ontario?

Hon. James J. Bradley: That is precisely why we are taking out the premium cable TV that in many instances you put into the system in the province of Ontario; that's precisely why we're doing it.

The Attorney General has mentioned on this occasion and many other occasions the amount of work that is being done on behalf of victims in the province of Ontario. We remember the huge surplus that was in that fund when the Conservative government was in power. That surplus has diminished considerably with our government in power. We are spending more money on victims' services. We are serving more victims at this time, as the Attorney General has appropriately pointed out, than your government ever did. We have expanded the program tremendously in this province, with, I think, positive results.

On the other side of it, we are ending some of the practices that you established in our prison system.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know what, Minister? The practice you should end is the practice of denying these mothers access to support simply because they did not see the murder of their children. That is outrageous. Today, you're paying for Zen yoga classes to give inmates—and this is a description from your very own ministry—"a leisure experience that silences the mind and disciplines the body."

Meanwhile, there's no silence for victims of crime like Wendy Flanagan, who lives in a nightmare because she can't bury her daughter, whose bones are sitting in a forensic lab, or Donna Dixon, who copes with the knowledge that her son was kidnapped, shot, incinerated and put into bags of animal feed.

These are real people, Minister. Will you finally act on behalf of these mothers and quit putting the rights of prisoners ahead of legitimate victims of the most violent crimes?

Hon. James J. Bradley: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We've already said in this House—the Premier said and I said—that we're going to find a way to appropriately deal with these individual cases.

What's interesting, though, is that the wording in the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board act is the same wording as when the Tories were in power, and they didn't change it. It's the same wording, pretty much, that's been in the act since the beginning.

There's a recurrent theme here. My friend the Leader of the Opposition stands and complains about something that was in existence under his watch, and he did nothing about it. Then when we deal with it, he is all full of outrage. It's the cable in prisons that we're dealing with getting rid of, but he put it in. It's the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board victim who's not dealt with as we would all like, but he knew about that before, and we're fixing it. It's the victims' justice fund that he accumulated; we're distributing it—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

NUCLEAR SAFETY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The US Environmental Protection Agency is reporting increased radiation levels in rain water, drinking water and milk across the United States as a result of the nuclear crisis in Japan. Yesterday, when asked whether radiation levels were elevated in Ontario, three ministers didn't know the answer. The Minister of Energy said that he had heard that radiation levels had increased, but wouldn't say where, what they were found in or what the levels were. Today, the Premier said that he didn't even know about the rise in radiation levels.

Why is this government all over the map on what is an important public health issue?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Even on an issue as serious as this, the leader of the third party still says things that aren't in keeping with the facts.

Here's the situation: We need to be vigilant with what's happening in Japan, and we need to ensure that we learn any lessons that can be learned from the terrible tragedy that the Japanese people are still coping with.

The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission works with respective federal departments like Health Canada to monitor radiation levels across Canada on an ongoing basis. They note that their detections do not pose any risks to Ontarians or Canadians. Our Ontario medical officer of health spoke out yesterday on this, and this is what she had to say: "Based on current information, I am of the view that there is no health risk for Ontarians from the damaged nuclear facility in Japan."

"Canada and Ontario have strong systems in place to protect"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It is precisely the facts that Ontarians want about this issue. The public is rightly concerned about the impacts of the Japanese crisis in Ontario. They need full information and transparency about radiation levels in Ontario in order to be reassured and

make healthy decisions, yet this government totally dropped the ball in the monitoring and sharing of this important information.

When exactly did the Ontario government find out about the radiation levels that were raised, and why wasn't the public made aware of that information?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to invite the leader of the third party to join us in reassuring Ontario families that indeed there is no health risk involved in this whatsoever, and all the experts who have weighed in to this have made that very clear.

She asks about the information on radiation levels. The information on this is reported on the websites of the federal government through Health Canada, which I believe has it on its website, and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. So that information is available. It's there for the public.

Again, I would invite the leader of the third party to reassure her constituents and families across Ontario that there are no health risks involved in this at this point in time. That's what all of the experts, from our medical officer of health here in Ontario to the federal agencies that actually have carriage of this particular issue, are saying as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is a simple matter of transparency and accountability and public health. The Environmental Protection Agency is publicly posting, in real time, radiation levels in milk, rain, drinking water and air for locations across the United States. Health Canada publishes data on radiation in air on its website, but there is no data on radiation levels in milk, water and rain publicly available in Ontario.

When will the government make this important information available to Ontarians?

Hon. Brad Duguid: As I've said, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission and Health Canada take these matters very seriously, as they should. We take these matters very seriously as well. That's why they post on their websites information as it becomes available.

I want to ask the leader of the third party one more time: Will she join with us in reassuring Ontario families about what Ontario's medical officer of health is saying, what the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission is saying, what Health Canada is saying, or does she have an alternative motive to bringing forward these questions?

These are legitimate questions. We're providing responses that are in keeping with the information that the professionals engaged in these areas are providing, and that is that radiation levels in Ontario are not at any kind of an unsafe or unhealthy condition at this point—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

NUCLEAR SAFETY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. Media reports indicate that Bruce Power had

found increased radioactivity levels in late March. Dr. Ray Copes, the director of environmental protection at the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion, has been consulting with provincial and federal counterparts on this issue since at least April 1.

How is it, then, that the Ministers of Energy and Health waited almost two weeks until the NDP asked questions in the Legislature before revealing that there was an increase in radioactivity levels in Ontario?

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague is looking for something where there is nothing to be found. I think the single most important thing that we can do today is to send a message on behalf of all members of this Legislature to reassure Ontario families: There is no danger associated with their food; there's no danger associated with their water; there's no danger associated with their milk; there's no danger associated with the air; there's no danger associated with the environment.

We are relying on the very best expert evidence and advice that we are receiving. The fact of the matter is, what we have today in Ontario is not harmful to our health. That's an important message that I'm sure my honourable colleague opposite is going to want to join us in sending to Ontario families.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The message I'm trying to relay to this Premier is that Ontario families actually deserve all of the information on this issue; that's the important message. Full posting of radioactivity levels in air, water and food—that's all we want; we want to have all of the information. But the government seems more concerned with dampening fears than with providing full information.

Yesterday, in a hastily prepared press release, the medical officer of health said that there was no risk from radioactivity. Did she review radioactivity levels of air, water, rain and food? And if so, will information on these levels be shared with the public?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: As was anticipated by experts around the world, there was thinking that the radiation that is leaking from a nuclear reactor in Japan would make its way into the atmosphere and migrate into the western hemisphere. So this radiation, which has been referred to as "minuscule" by the experts in terms of its increase—they tell us, in fact, that there is more radiation in a natural rainfall than there is existing today as a result of the occurrence in Japan.

We continue to hear from our experts. They monitor this on a daily basis. They have been anticipating this for a long time. Again I say to my honourable colleague: The last thing we want to do is alarm Ontario families when there is no need to do so. I think our joint responsibility here today is to reassure Ontario families that there is, in fact, no danger to their health whatsoever.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government needs to do better in sharing information about radioactivity levels—period. They need to do better about sharing that infor-

mation. It is not good enough that, more than a month after the Japan earthquake, Ontarians are still not getting full information about changes in radioactivity levels. This is not about fearmongering; it's about providing full and open information to reassure Ontarians. Americans are getting that full and clear information; Ontarians are simply not getting that full, clear and transparent response from their government.

Will the Premier commit to providing full information on radioactivity levels in milk, rain, drinking water and air to the public now and on an ongoing basis?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to refer my honourable colleague to the news release that was put out just recently by Dr. Arlene King, our chief medical officer of health in Ontario. She says, "I am of the view that there is no health risk to Ontarians from the damaged nuclear facility in Japan."

"Canada and Ontario have strong systems in place to protect the safety of our food supply."

"The government of Canada is monitoring and assessing the situation at the nuclear facility in Japan in order to assess any potential risks to Canadians. To date, all imported and domestic products tested by the federal government are below Health Canada action levels for harmful radiation, and regular updates on test results are available on the Canadian Food Inspection Agency website."

Interjection: It's been there all along.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: That information has been there all along.

I say to my honourable colleague once more that if she has the opportunity to speak directly to the media today, I would encourage her to send an important, intelligent, thoughtful message to Ontario families: We are in fact safe, based on the best advice we are receiving from our experts here in Ontario and Canada.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: To the Minister of Correctional Services: It took the release of freedom-of-information records to the Ontario PC caucus for you to cancel premium cable packages on the prisoners' high-definition cable TVs. But here are some of the prisoner perks the records from another FOI request show you still find money for: creative writing classes that teach inmates "how to create one's own story"; yoga classes that give inmates "transferable skills that can be taken back to their cells"; and healthy alternatives to fast food lessons to let you be the nanny Premier, even to criminals. Meanwhile, you force victims of crime, like Liz Hoage, Wendy Flanagan, Claudette Lalonde, Donna Dixon and Kellie Smith to beg for support to deal with the loss of their murdered children. In the words of Kellie Smith, "How is this fair?"

Hon. James J. Bradley: I can tell the member, first of all, that he is aware that the Attorney General has pointed out very vividly to this House that our government has moved much more extensively and comprehensively in terms of providing assistance to victims of crime. You

left a huge surplus in that particular account. You covered far fewer people when you were in government.

The programs you describe are programs which were available to inmates, in many cases, when your government was in power.

If you're asking that volunteers from the Salvation Army and churches—and I know that the church that I belong to, the United Church, has had volunteers who have gone into the correctional institutions in this province for years and years—withdraw their services, I think you'll be hearing from those volunteers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: That wasn't the question I asked, and Kellie Smith wouldn't be very happy with that answer, either.

Kellie Smith's son Patrick was shot while sitting on the couch at a friend's apartment. Kellie lives paycheque to paycheque and is the sole provider for her 15-year-old daughter. She had to use the rent money to pay for Patrick's funeral. Over a year ago, she applied to the victims of crime fund for support, but she's still waiting for an answer.

You open the vault for criminals. You pay so that they have transferable skills to take back to their cells. You want to be the nanny Premier for murderers and crooks. How do you explain spending so much on classes for criminals and perks for prisoners while making victims of crime wait for support?

Hon. James J. Bradley: That's even over the top for my friend in asking questions.

I think there's a recognition from the Attorney General of how extensively this government has moved in helping victims. The Attorney General has also given an undertaking to look into individual cases that have been raised either in the media or in this House and will be dealing with that appropriately, with the largesse that has been provided to victims in this province, as it should be.

In terms of the other programs, I really question whether the member truly believes—because he was part of a government that had these programs in effect—that these people who are going to come out of the prison system at some time and come back into the community—they have to be prepared to come back into the community. Your government recognized this when you brought a lot of these programs into effect, so that when they do come out into the community they can be contributing members instead of going back into a life of crime. That was a good policy you had at that time, and I agree with that policy today.

TAXATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Anyone who tuned in to last night's federal leadership debate saw clearly that when it comes to corporate tax giveaways, the Prime Minister and the Premier of Ontario sing from exactly the same songbook.

This morning, yet another study proves exhaustively that these corporate tax giveaways don't increase business investment and don't create jobs.

When will this government finally abandon the discredited tax giveaway policies that it and the Prime Minister cling so stubbornly to and accept the evidence presented in study after study that corporate tax giveaways don't create jobs?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'm proud of the tax package for jobs and growth that our government created. For every dollar of corporate tax cuts, we have more than \$2 in personal tax cuts.

I'd refer my colleague opposite to his colleague from Beaches–East York, who quite properly noted that everybody is getting a tax cut.

I've said this before to the third party and I will say it again: We are faced with competition from Alberta, from British Columbia, from Saskatchewan. The Ministry of Finance estimates that we are losing between \$200 million and \$500 million a year in revenue due to tax seepage as a result of the lower corporate tax rates. It is simply a matter of being competitive and simply a matter of creating good, high-paying, new jobs across Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Minister of Finance, you're going to have to look at the reality in this world. The facts presented in this latest study of Statistics Canada data by the CCPA couldn't be more definitive. Business capital spending has declined notably as a share of gross domestic product since the early 1980s, despite repeated tax cuts.

When study after study shows that there are far better ways to create jobs than corporate tax cuts, why is this government walking lockstep with Stephen Harper while ignoring everyone else?

1100

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite—I've read the study—is completely misinterpreting the study. He's just taking it completely out of context, isolating certain variables and not being completely candid with the people of Ontario. What I will refer him to are the Q3 results for Ontario, which saw business, machinery and equipment investments up 7.7%—a record—since we have been implementing that.

I think the only people out of touch are the New Democrats, who don't want to deal with unemployed steelworkers in Hamilton. They want to say, "Stay unemployed." They don't want to deal with unemployed auto workers throughout southwestern Ontario; they'd rather create jobs in Alberta. They don't want to deal with the unemployed in northern Ontario, in the pulp and paper industry; they'd rather create jobs in other provinces. Not this government; we're going to continue to do the right thing by investing in health, investing in education—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, today is the International Day of Pink. This is an internationally recognized day against bullying, discrimination and homophobia. I know all

members in this House agree that there is no place for bullying in our schools, places of work or communities.

Minister, parents in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham have been contacting me as they want to know that when they send their child to school, they're going to be learning in a safe and positive environment, free from discrimination and bullying. We know that in order for students to learn, they need to feel safe at school.

Minister, what can I tell my constituents who want to know that their government is standing up to combat bullying in Ontario schools for Ontario students?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: An important question, and I know that all members in this House have heard from constituents who are very concerned about bullying. The fact is, it's important that this government has taken action, through our safe schools strategy legislation that was passed here, to deal with issues of bullying in schools.

Now we know that bullying, for example, is something in schools that—students can be suspended for acts of bullying. Parents of students—both those who would be guilty of doing it and the students who would have been victims—must be notified.

We continue, as a government, to work with our schools and school boards to increase that knowledge and understanding of bullying issues and to build capacity on how best to deal with these issues and ensure that they—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I think we can all appreciate that bullying needs to be combated at the root cause, which is primarily because of indifference, misunderstanding and fear.

Minister, the roots where the day of pink began were with two grade 12 students in Nova Scotia who stood up for a grade 9 student who was being bullied because he wore a pink shirt to school. Through the leadership of the grade 12 students, the next day, the majority of the school population was wearing pink shirts to combat bullying. Because of their leadership, adults across Canada and around the world now wear pink as a symbol that bullying is not acceptable in any form. This type of leadership is both inspirational and necessary to confront the important issue of homophobia in our schools.

Minister, what can I tell parents in my riding that we are doing to work toward students no longer being targets, specifically of homophobic bullying, in Ontario's schools?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Of course, homophobia is absolutely unacceptable. To help combat homophobia in our schools, we have brought in the first equity and inclusive strategy that requires school boards to have policies in place to combat discrimination based on race, age, gender, disability or sexual orientation.

The member is absolutely right when she says that this is the type of leadership we need—the leadership that those students in Nova Scotia demonstrated. That is why we have made very clear in our policy that student-led groups to deal with these issues must be allowed in schools where students have said this is what they want.

We are committed to working to build capacity to work with school boards and, most definitely, with students in our schools to deal—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: This question is to the Premier. Premier, for the second time this week, you've been caught red-handed trying to fool Ontario families. First, the Ontario PC caucus caught you trying to hide expenses by posting them under the names of other people in your office. Then you tried to take credit for cancelling premium cable packages at provincial jails the same day that the Ontario PC caucus obtained freedom-of-information records that revealed what you have been up to. Premier, what made you think you would get away with this?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker—

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I hear the member for Lanark interjecting here, the member who personally ensured that Norm Sterling, a long-standing—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

Please continue.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member for Mississippi Mills would understand, being a long-serving member of this Legislature and having served in the justice portfolio, that this government, when in power, had many of these programs available to people, largely delivered by volunteers in our society.

Many members of this House belong to churches and volunteer organizations that have gone into the system over the years and ensured that the people who were in there, when they were coming out of the system—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: First of all, high-definition TV didn't even exist a decade ago. You were caught red-handed in a clumsy scheme to try and fool Ontario families. It didn't even occur to you to cancel premium cable for inmates until you had to release the FOI records to the Ontario PC caucus. Even then, you sat on the FOI records for as long as you could. They were 137 days overdue. We had to threaten to haul the Minister of Correctional Services in front of the privacy commissioner before you were forced to release them. When you did release them, you panicked and ran throughout the halls of this building trying to quiet the media, and we've never seen you run that fast. Is it any wonder you say that crime isn't a priority when you plot and scheme so hard to hide what you've been up to?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I will just remind members on both sides, in the questioning and the answering, that policy is what we need to

discuss and not bring things down to a personal level in a question or a personal level in an answer—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East.

I would just caution both honourable members about that. Minister.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you very much for that caution.

I appreciate the fact that the critic for the Conservative Party would think that I could move that quickly in the hallways of Queen's Park. I'm not in as good physical condition as the member or the House leader for the Conservative Party. But I can tell you that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The member from Peterborough and the member from Lanark: The question and answer was between the member from Simcoe North and the Minister of Community Safety, not between Lanark and Peterborough. If you want to have a discussion, please don't interfere in the question and answer and don't interfere for our guests who want to be here. Take your discussions outside this chamber.

Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I've been in opposition, so I know the kinds of questions you have to ask in opposition, even when the questions are those which ask the present government to fix a problem that the last government created.

Let us clarify one more time for the House. You put the premium cable in the correctional institutes; this government is taking the premium cable out—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Perhaps the member from Renfrew may want to reflect on his comments.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please come to order. New question.

1110

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The budget announced the closure of three supposedly underutilized and inefficient jails: in Sarnia, Owen Sound and Walkerton. This announcement came as a complete surprise. In Sarnia, the jail has been operating at more than 100% capacity. It is the newest small jail in the province and it is part of a comprehensive justice system serving not only Sarnia and surrounding communities but also plays a major role in border security. Can the Premier explain why, then, his government made this decision without a shred of evidence?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community Safety.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm somewhat surprised to hear this question coming from the New Democratic

Party that they want us to keep old prisons, inefficient prisons which are not serving the purposes of the province of Ontario in light of our economic circumstances—that you want us to keep those open.

We do know that the Conservative government, when it was in power, closed about 25 jails in the province of Ontario. We recognize that. I suspect that there might have been some jails—I can't say for sure—that might have been closed under the New Democratic Party.

We are looking for ways to save money in this province, to devote that money to health care, education and other very constructive activities. We've looked at the old buildings, inefficient buildings, and revised the system, and we hope to have the efficiencies that can be channelled back into those—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The problem is that this particular decision makes no financial sense. This government has ignored the cost of transporting prisoners between Sarnia and Windsor, an over two-hour drive each way. This government has ignored the concerns of First Nations communities who have worked hard to develop appropriate local supports in this jail. They've ignored the important financial contribution that the \$6 million in corrections wages brings to the community as a whole. If the Premier had bothered to talk to the local community, he would actually know all of this.

Now that he knows, will the Premier re-evaluate these closures?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would point out to the member that the Sarnia jail was built over 50 years ago and requires more than \$1 million in capital investments. It costs \$180 per day to house an inmate in the Sarnia jail. It will cost an estimated \$125 per day to house those same inmates in the new Windsor jail when it opens in 2013. This represents a savings of approximately 30% to Ontario taxpayers.

The Ministry of Correctional Services and Community Safety officials, when asked to look at ways to find efficiencies and save money, provided information to the ministry—to the minister, in this particular case—and the decisions are based on those statistics provided by ministry officials.

PHOTO IDENTIFICATION

Mr. Dave Levac: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. There are citizens in this province who do not have access to a driver's licence. Approximately 1.5 million Ontarians aged 16 years and older do not have a valid driver's licence.

I have heard from and worked with many of my constituents, including the CNIB and the Canadian Council of the Blind representatives, about the need to have a proper photo ID. These constituents are from all walks of life but, for some reason or other, either cannot or choose not to have a driver's licence. Some just don't own a car.

These fine folks find it very difficult to access the most basic services which require a particular photo ID.

Some may know that many people are forced to carry their passports as a form of ID; that's not recommended.

This is certainly not a new situation. Previous governments never attempted to remedy this. Can the minister please provide an update on the status for a non-driver photo ID card?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: This is really a very important issue for people who don't have a driver's licence in Ontario, and it has been this way for decades. We know that a photo ID—if you have a driver's licence, there are a whole lot more things you can do than if you don't have a driver's licence: opening a new bank account, cashing a cheque, applying for a loan, gaining admittance to certain bars and clubs, boarding a domestic flight.

I've had meetings with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, the Canadian Council of the Blind and numerous other groups who are concerned about this. It's really not just an administration issue; it's a social justice issue, and we're working with groups to make sure that we can move forward on it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Dave Levac: I reinforce my point: Previous governments did nothing about this issue whatsoever. I want to thank the minister for moving forward on it and taking into account these folks who don't drive and thus do not have photo IDs and drivers' licences: Ontarians such as seniors and those with special needs, or those who don't own a car.

It's too often our most vulnerable populations that are left with the least options needed to level that playing field. This legislation, if passed, would address exactly the type of situation so that the people who do not have a driver's licence, who cannot obtain a driver's licence or who decide not to drive have a proper piece of photo identification with them.

I've been working on this issue for a long time, and I'm glad to see that this government is doing something about it. That's why there's such a need for this photo ID. Ontario and Quebec are the only provinces in the country that don't have this yet. I'm confident that we're going to get an answer. Given the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you to the member for Brant for working on this file. When I was first appointed to this ministry, one of the first meetings I had, actually, was with the CNIB, who brought forward this issue.

We need to make sure that the photo card has the right features on it. There have to be some special features, particularly for people with visual impairments. There are some significant IT requirements that need to be in place through ServiceOntario in order to be able to issue these cards.

I'm going to be bringing forward an update to the House very soon. I just want to reinforce that we consider this a priority for people who, throughout their whole lives, have not been able to have the kind of ID that someone who has a driver's licence is able to have.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. The Minister of Health dismissed my previous question on the costs related to the air ambulance and critical care land ambulance organization. I'm hoping the Premier will take this more seriously.

Capital expenses attributed to Ornge for the 2008-09 fiscal year were \$2.25 million. In 2009-10 they increased to \$8.6 million, followed by another increase for 2010-11 to more than \$12 million.

My question to the Premier is this: How much of that taxpayer-funded capital has subsidized equipment and facilities that are actually being used by the for-profit businesses that are also owned by the Ornge organization?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Minister of Health is rightly proud of the achievements of the new Ornge ambulance service, which is expanding air ambulance service across the province and, as I understand it, doing it in a very, very efficient way.

I am delighted that, in fact, there is new capital and new air ambulances are available to serve remote communities. Just yesterday in my community, a little boy was hit by a car backing up, and it was an Ornge ambulance that took him from Windsor to the best care available anywhere in the world, in London.

Those investments are important. The return to taxpayers is important. It's measured by a variety of factors, including improved service and improved care for all of our people.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: No one is arguing about the importance of air ambulance.

This is the annual report for this organization. In every one of its pages, there is not one reference to financial information, not one, yet 12 million of taxpayers' dollars have been transferred to this company. They have just moved into a new \$3-million facility.

I am asking this of the Premier: How many health care dollars transferred to Ornge are being used to subsidize parts of this business that are for-profit, that are owned by this Ornge organization? Can he tell me that, or does he know?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I can assure the Legislature and the people of Ontario that the contractual arrangements with Ornge protect the interest of taxpayers unequivocally. We believe that these investments—and this is one of the reasons we engaged Ornge. You can see their new facilities at the Toronto Island airport. You can see the air ambulances themselves throughout the province of Ontario.

I'm glad the member opposite is talking about how money is used and where this money gets found, because the people of Ontario would like to know where we're going to find the \$3 billion in cuts in health care if they cut the HST. I can assure the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew will withdraw the comment that he made.

1120

Mr. John Yakabuski: I don't know how he can keep lying about that.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I can assure the people of Ontario that the arrangements with Ornge are proper. The service is outstanding, and by the way, when that member and his party were in office, they refused to make the appropriate investments in air ambulance service, particularly to the north, that were so desperately needed.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Members of the Algonquin Nation, including Algonquin Firekeeper Daniel Bernard, are here at Queen's Park again today. They are frustrated with the government's refusal to listen to their concerns about clear-cutting in the Ottawa South March Highlands. For months, they've been calling for the Minister of Culture to conduct a new archaeological study on the site to protect sacred aboriginal artifacts, but the government has refused flatly to address any of their concerns.

In the meantime, the area is being clear-cut for new development. Instead of showing such disrespect to First Nations, will the government halt the destruction at this site while a new and proper study is actually conducted?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Tourism and Culture.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question. The city of Ottawa is the approval authority for the South March Highlands development. It is solely responsible for the decision to require an archaeological assessment. Under the Ontario Heritage Act, my ministry approves the licensing of consultant archaeologists. As well, my ministry reviews their archaeology assessments.

In the case of the South March Highlands, the assessment in question was completed under the 1993 standards and guidelines. My ministry reviewed the archaeological assessments of the site in 2004. I understand that the city had asked the developer to engage the local aboriginal—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The reality is that the South March Highlands is a diverse and valuable ecosystem, home to many species at risk. Many community groups, along with First Nations, have raised their voices and come together to oppose the razing of this area for development.

This government has ignored significant evidence of archaeological artifacts in the South March Highlands. In fact, the Minister of Culture has accepted an archaeological study which he refers to, commissioned by the developer, a study which has been called by other archae-

ologists "fatally flawed." In fact, an award-winning archaeologist, Robert McGhee, labelled it "fatally flawed."

Before the final trees are cut down, will the Premier finally demand that a new and proper study be conducted?

Hon. Michael Chan: When any artifacts are found on the land, the developer has the responsibility to hire a licensed archaeologist to complete an archaeological assessment. The licensed archaeologist is then required to report their findings to the ministry. I have confirmed this in writing to several interested parties. With that said, my ministry is not an approval authority with respect to any development project. My ministry's role is to review archaeological assessments conducted by consultant archaeologists.

My ministry also licenses consultant archaeologists under the Ontario Heritage Act. It is responsible for decisions regarding the needs—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CONVENTION CENTRES

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is also for the Minister of Tourism and Culture. Minister, yesterday we had the great pleasure of watching my city's new jewel, the Ottawa Convention Centre, officially open its doors, and it is spectacular.

As the economy continues to be a priority for families across this province, a convention centre is a smart investment to drive key sectors of our economy with new jobs and new opportunities. That is because convention centres are more than just a piece of our civic landscape; they are constantly alive with people, attracting regional, national and international events and conferences. These visitors, in turn, create new jobs—jobs that are critical in my riding of Ottawa Centre.

Could the minister tell my constituents and the people of Ontario what this government has been doing to support convention centres as a key driver for tourism—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. He's right: It is a spectacular building there.

Investments in convention centres stimulate business and contribute to our province's economy. Across North America, the convention business is worth more than \$263 billion. This is an industry that creates and supports jobs.

Speaker, allow me to give you some numbers. Since 2003, we have invested across this province \$60 million to redevelop the Ottawa Convention Centre, \$35 million to construct the Scotiabank—

Interjections.

Hon. Michael Chan: As the economy turns the corner, our investment is putting Ontario in the minds of conventioners—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: It's important that we recognize the economic benefits of investing in convention centres. Equally important is a vision for an Ontario that welcomes people from across Canada and around the world to come visit, experience, and enjoy the amazing things this province has to offer.

However, our investment must also yield results. When we invest, Ontario families want to see the difference our investment is making in their community and know that their government is making smart, reasoned investments on their behalf. They must see the jobs it creates and the increased numbers of tourists that are coming to our community. I can certainly say that the Ottawa Convention Centre is already attracting international attention, and we have seen the people who have been hard at work making it worthy of that attention.

Could the minister share with the House some of the tangible economic—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Michael Chan: Our investments are making a difference for families. Yesterday, I attended the opening of the Ottawa Convention Centre with the Premier and the honourable member from Ottawa Centre. All our partners agree on the economic benefits. In Ottawa, the projected economic impact is \$200 million, supporting 3,000 new jobs.

National and international events are also coming to Ottawa, events such as the National Hockey League's 2012 all-star game.

In the Niagara region, our investment in the Scotiabank Convention Centre is creating jobs. It is projected to inject \$93 million into Niagara's economy, creating more than 200 direct jobs.

There is no doubt that our investment is creating strong jobs for families across—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

MUNICIPAL PLANNING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. As you know, in March, an application for a quarry operation in the township of Melancthon was filed with your ministry. This application, at over 2,300 acres, is the largest in Ontario's history.

The comment period ending on April 26 does not give Melancthon enough time to prepare a comprehensive submission. The township is finding it difficult to assemble a team of experts to assist them on such a large application. Also, the notice of application did not appear in the Dundalk Herald, the only weekly publication which covers the northern half of Melancthon.

Minister, will you commit today to extending the deadline for comments to August 26 so that the township of Melancthon has an opportunity to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm pleased to answer the question. I understand there has been local concern expressed about the aggregate licence application from the Highland Companies in Melancthon township.

I can confirm that our local district office has received a licence application. I want to make it clear that now is the time for local citizens who have concerns about this project to become involved in the consultation process. Groups or individuals have 45 days, or until April 26, to register concerns or objections to the proposal through the environmental website. It can also be accessed via my ministry website.

I can tell you that I did meet with a delegation from Melancthon township on February 28 of this year at the ROMA/Ontario Good Roads Association conference. I know the council is concerned, and I want to ensure that their residents' concerns are addressed.

I'd be happy to answer further in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Minister, when you met with Melancthon, I understand that they did share their concerns that they were having difficulty finding these experts, in some cases because they had already been hired by the proponent.

I want to ensure that the residents of Melancthon and North Dufferin actually get an opportunity to involve themselves in the process. This is a huge operation that is of a scale never seen in Ontario. I think it is incumbent on you to make the opportunity for residents and the township to actually have the time needed so that they can review the application properly. I would hope that, with the 10 resolutions I will send over to you now from townships in both Simcoe and Dufferin, you would seriously consider their—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Even before the application was submitted, I know that this proposed quarry was the subject of significant local media attention. Residents are concerned about the preservation, I understand, of agricultural land and the quarry's effect on the water table. The Aggregate Resources Act has a process that gives the applicant up to two years, until March 2013, to resolve any of the objections to the application. If there are still unresolved objections to the licence application after that two-year period, the Ministry of Natural Resources can refer the application to the Ontario Municipal Board.

We are at the very early stages of this application, and I would encourage anyone with an interest in this aggregate proposal to become involved in the consultation process. I'm interested in what they have to say about the application, and I encourage all members to participate.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Education. The Toronto District School Board will be discussing the issue of allowing TV advertising in high schools tonight, again. Schools across Ontario are

starved for cash and are being forced to consider exposing students to corporate advertising. The Toronto District School Board is proposing to download this decision to individual schools. Does the minister agree that the decision to allow TV advertising should be left up to local schools?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Actually, the honourable member would know that we have made a commitment that we are going to be bringing forward draft regulations around corporate involvement in our schools in Ontario. We feel that it's absolutely appropriate that we do have a look at how corporations are involved in our schools, particularly given that this government has made such significant investments to support education in our schools. We've increased funding by 40%. That, in our view, has a significant impact on the need for schools to consider these types of partnerships. We do recognize that there may be particular circumstances in situations where it would be appropriate. We think that it is something that does need to have guidelines, and that is why our government is committed to ensuring that we put those in place for the good of the school community and the students and families who would be involved.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: We have spoken to trustees, to parents, to student trustees, and they are expressing utter frustration that there are still no clear provincial rules on corporate advertising for our school boards. While your ministry takes years to develop guidelines, schools have to scramble to bring in revenue. When will the ministry show leadership—any kind of leadership—and establish clear guidelines and prevent students from being used as targets for corporate advertising?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm very happy to have this opportunity to make clear for the member opposite that this is an issue that we have been dealing with, that we have shown leadership on. As a result of that, we now have guidelines that very clearly describe student fees and what is appropriate for student fees. We now have draft guidelines on our website around fundraising in our schools, and we are eager to get the feedback from all of those stakeholder groups, like students and parents and trustees, around what is appropriate in terms of fundraising and the guidelines that are needed. And this year, we are going to be bringing out draft guidelines that deal with corporate involvement in our schools. We think this is fair. We think it is appropriate at this time, particularly since we have made such significant increased investments in our schools. We are now spending fully 40% more in our education system than ever before. We think that now is the time to deal with these issues.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on the motion by Ms. Smith for allocation

of time on Bill 173, An Act respecting 2011 Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1134 to 1139.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members please take their seats.

On April 12, Ms. Smith moved government notice of motion 56. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Duncan, Dwight	Naqvi, Yasir
Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Oraziotti, David
Balkissoon, Bas	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Hoskins, Eric	Ramal, Khalil
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Ramsay, David
Best, Margaret	Jaczek, Helena	Rinaldi, Lou
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Ruprecht, Tony
Broten, Laurel C.	Johnson, Rick	Sandals, Liz
Brown, Michael A.	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Carroll, Aileen	Leal, Jeff	Smith, Monique
Chan, Michael	Levac, Dave	Sorbara, Greg
Chiarelli, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Sousa, Charles
Colle, Mike	McGuinty, Dalton	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crozier, Bruce	Melleur, Madeleine	Van Bommel, Maria
Dickson, Joe	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Murray, Glen R.	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hillier, Randy	Munro, Julia
Bailey, Robert	Horwath, Andrea	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bisson, Gilles	Jones, Sylvia	Prue, Michael
Chudleigh, Ted	Klees, Frank	Savoline, Joyce
Clark, Steve	Kormos, Peter	Shurman, Peter
DiNovo, Cheri	MacLeod, Lisa	Tabuns, Peter
Dunlop, Garfield	Marchese, Rosario	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gélinas, France	Martiniuk, Gerry	Yakabuski, John
Hampton, Howard	Miller, Norm	
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Paul	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):

The ayes are 54; the nays are 31.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1143 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to acknowledge what I will say in advance is quite a lengthy list of individuals joining us here in the gallery today. I understand they're making their way in:

Mary Ballantyne from the OACAS; Francine Boldovitch at the Dave Thomas Foundation; Deborah Brennan, the Adoption Council of Canada; Noelle Burke, Adoption Council of Ontario; Pat Convery, Adoption Council of Ontario; Aleisha Deece-Cassidy, Lexi Deece-Cassidy,

and Sean Deece-Cassidy; Adam Diamond, the coordinator of YouthCAN; Irwin Elman, Ontario's child advocate; Jill Fairbrother, the Dave Thomas Foundation; Will Falk, expert panel member and adoptive parent; Nathan Gilbert, the executive director of the Laidlaw Foundation; Rory Gleeson, from the OACAS; Marcelo Gomez-Wiuckstern, OACAS; Mary Henry, the Adoption Council of Ontario; Neil Lester, FirstOak and the Dave Thomas Foundation; Jade Maitland, the coordinator of YouthCAN; Eric Martin and Quinn Martin; Bruce McKenna, the Dave Thomas Foundation; Denney Morrison; Virginia Rowden from OACAS; Moira Sicat from the Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare; John Stapleton; Susan Towle from the Dave Thomas Foundation; Ene Underwood from the Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare; Andrea Weissman-Daniels, Ignite the Spark fund; and a number of individuals from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

Welcome to all of you.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'd like to welcome to the Legislative Assembly today my EA from the riding, Michael Jiggins; also, from the municipality of North Grenville, a long-time family friend and a councillor in that municipality, Tim Sutton. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly today.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I would like to introduce, in the west members' gallery, an Oakville constituent and author, Deborah Brennan. She wrote a fantastic book about the human side of the adoption process called *Labours of Love*, and she's here today to hear the announcement with the adoption council.

CLERK'S BIRTHDAY

Mr. Steve Clark: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Little birds told me that there may be a young lady at the table who is 29 years old; I think it's her birthday. Through you to the Clerk, maybe that can be clarified?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Happy birthday to the Clerk.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RAY TANGUAY

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I'm indeed fortunate that my position allows me to meet so many outstanding members of my community, persons who I admire for enriching the lives of so many. Though it is most difficult to choose from this distinguished group, I stand here today to honour the dedicated employees of Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada in Cambridge and Woodstock, and their leader, Mr. Ray Tanguay, a person of great ability and vision.

Mr. Tanguay was recently named as one of three new senior managing officers for Toyota Motor Corp., making him the top non-Japanese executive in the com-

pany. I am proud to know Mr. Tanguay and to have witnessed him become a global leader in the automotive industry while bringing prosperity to so many in our region. Mr. Tanguay began his career with Toyota in 1991 and is today senior vice-president of Toyota Motor North America and chairman of Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada.

The Cambridge plant has undergone many expansions since 1986, including Woodstock, and today employs 6,500 people.

With Mr. Tanguay as president, Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada in Cambridge became the only automobile manufacturing plant outside of Japan to produce the jewel of Toyota, a Lexus brand of vehicle.

Today, I salute Ray Tanguay and his team at Toyota and wish them continued success.

JOHN BADHAM

Mr. Jeff Leal: In my riding of Peterborough, we've had over the years many great media personalities. I rise today to speak about a radio announcer in Peterborough who recently made known his intention to leave his daily news broadcasting position.

I don't believe there's anyone in Peterborough who doesn't recognize the deep, strong voice of John Badham. We've all been listening to him deliver the news for 23 years. John completed his last broadcast on March 4. He has promised the residents of Peterborough that they will continue to hear his views on local events and politics, but not always on the daily news broadcast. He recently stated that this change of pace gives him "a little more opportunity to wander [and] talk to more people without the definition of a time frame of being on air."

John's career began many years before coming to the Peterborough airwaves. He began broadcasting over 53 years ago in Saskatchewan. At the age of 73, he can boast of being the voice of the Toronto Argonauts as one of his accomplishments as a broadcaster.

John has always been a well-informed, non-biased reporter who took his position in our community very seriously. He researched his material and delivered the news with passion and respect. Over the next 12 months, he will transition into his new role at KRUZ FM radio station, working on commentaries and opinions, but not on a set timetable.

I want to wish John, his wife, Dorothy, and his family all the very best for the future. We'll all stay tuned to see what comes next as he transitions into this very new phase.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: As we recognize National Victims of Crime Awareness Week in Canada this year, we acknowledge that there are many voices and many paths taken by victims of crime and those who work to support them. We acknowledge all children, youth, adults and seniors who themselves, or whose loved ones, have been affected by the injurious nature of crime. We are

reminded of the ongoing need to treat victims of crime with compassion and respect as they voice their unique experience and undertake their journey of recovery.

This is why I called on the government to make the recommendations in the Goudge report a priority. Victims of Dr. Charles Smith should not have to undergo the strain of delayed justice after they were so unconscionably denied justice. Indeed, no victim of crime should have to undergo the strain of a delayed criminal justice system. It is why I called on the government to account for a surplus in the victims' justice fund and to ensure that the rules of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board treat all victims fairly and with respect.

As members of provincial Parliament, we must work to ensure that victims of crime are heard, are respected and are not revictimized by the policies and programs of the state. It is for this reason that the PC caucus has supported and continues to support programs and policies that reduce crime and its victims while remaining ever-mindful of the need to support victims of crime through the criminal justice system and along their journey of recovery thereafter.

TORNADO MEDICAL SYSTEMS

Mr. Bill Mauro: I recently had the pleasure of being part of an important event. Tornado Medical Systems, or TMS, announced its first wave of recruitment to build its Thunder Bay product development team. TMS has over 20 employees. In August of last year, TMS announced that, with the help of a \$1-million investment from the northern Ontario heritage fund, they were establishing a new state-of-the-art product development facility in Thunder Bay's historic Whalen building.

Earlier this year, TMS announced that it was expanding its Thunder Bay team, recruiting software developers, electrical, mechanical and optical engineers, and engineering project managers. They are planning to add at least 10 more employees to their Thunder Bay lab alone.

The rise of TMS's Thunder Bay operations is another important step forward in the evolution of our region's economy. The rise of the knowledge-based sector in the northwest is helping grow and diversify the number and types of jobs in our community and offering opportunities to our young people.

Tornado Medical Systems has close ties to the Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute, including formal collaboration on the development of medical imaging devices. Several years ago, our government provided \$15 million in assistance to help establish the Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute.

That initial investment has helped set some extraordinary things in motion: the creation of a revolutionary new dual-site surgical centre; the growth of RegenMed and its recognition as an Ontario tissue and bone bank; and now TMS, just to name a few.

I want to congratulate Stefan Larson, CEO of TMS; Michael Power, the CEO of TBRRI; and Tornado Medical Systems' entire Thunder Bay team. Thunder Bay's knowledge-based economy is on the move.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm proud to say that my riding of Durham is home to many significant natural heritage features like the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt. Residents and municipalities have embraced the principle of stewardship and preservation throughout Durham. But while stewardship and protection are important, it must be done with respect for the people—the average land-owner, the taxpayer.

1510

This past week in Clarington residents learned that their land and livelihood could be taken away from them. The Ministry of Natural Resources and the municipality of Clarington have taken it upon themselves to designate swaths of land as "provincially significant wetlands." This would effectively restrict residents from farming, building and generally enjoying a productive use of their property.

I want to thank Heather Whalen, representing her father, William Wallace; Walter Pingle; Roland, Bert and Glenn Weigel; Kerry Meydam; Vicky MacBeth; Ted and Beth Meszaros; and Brian Catherwood, as well as Karen Tremblay, all of who have made some deputation to the municipality expressing their concerns.

These are some of the citizens who have raised these concerns. These are people whose lands and privileges are being taken from them. In many cases, no one from MNR has even been there to see their properties, yet they're being classified without any input.

I call on the Minister of Natural Resources to ensure fair rules are in place for residents to have meaningful input on the decision. What is the rush, Minister? Take your time and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

CANADIAN ABORIGINAL AND MINORITY SUPPLIER COUNCIL

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to welcome members of the Canadian Aboriginal and Minority Supplier Council to Toronto for their 2011 Diversity Procurement Fair.

The Canadian Aboriginal and Minority Supplier Council works to deliver programs and processes that promote and facilitate procurement opportunities between major corporations in Canada and suppliers of all sizes owned and operated by Canadian aboriginals and minorities.

As part of a range of products and services developed to facilitate engagement, inclusion and utilization of aboriginal and minority suppliers in the supply chain, the annual Diversity Procurement Fair provides a forum for aboriginal and visible minority entrepreneurs to present themselves to prospective buyers while providing corporations with an opportunity to meet and recruit prospective suppliers.

More than one in three Canadians is expected to be aboriginal or minority by 2031. Today, Toronto is close to 50%. Aboriginal peoples and minorities have been

buying and starting businesses faster than ever in recent years, contributing significantly to our economy, and the Canadian Aboriginal and Minority Supplier Council plays an important role in developing opportunities which support their sustained success.

The fair runs from April 13 to 14. I wish them all the best for another successful year.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Rick Johnson: The announcement in this year's budget of a permanent risk management program is good news for Ontario's farmers and farm families. I want to recognize the work done by our government, my colleague the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, and Ontario's farm organization leaders. They all deserve to be congratulated for a job well done. This program will give our farmers the predictability, bankability and stability they need to stay on the land and continue to provide us with the good things that grow in Ontario.

Unfortunately, the PC Party, when given the chance, chose to vote against the budget, against risk management and against supporting Ontario's hard-working farmers. But then, look how they treated our farmers when they were in government. They cut the agriculture budget, shut down 42 OMAFRA offices and sat by while farmers left the land. What farmers in Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock and across Ontario really want is an answer for why they voted against risk management.

This budget supports the hard work on the part of Ontario farmers—programs by farmers for farmers. It's one more example of our government helping farmers through difficult times.

HATE CRIMES

Mr. Mike Colle: B'nai Brith Canada recently published its 2010 audit of anti-Semitic incidents. The audit found that complaints of anti-Semitic violence, harassment and intimidation increased by 3% in Canada from the previous year.

All Ontarians have the right to live in a province free from discrimination, racism, intolerance and hate. Here in Ontario, we are committed to fighting discrimination in all forms. That's why I'm pleased that Ontario has taken action to fight anti-Semitism and hate crimes.

We've provided funding to B'nai Brith Canada in the past to support their efforts to strengthen networks, share information among victims' groups, educators and the media, victim service providers and members of the criminal justice system.

To address hate in all its forms, we have expanded Ontario's hate crime extremism investigative team. In addition, Ontario has a team of crown attorneys specially trained in hate crime legislation.

The Attorney General has also committed to ensuring that hate crime requests are brought to him for consideration and decided upon within 60 days so that charges can be laid.

We have also have passed a new law to make it easier for victims of hate crimes to sue offenders for damages resulting from emotional distress and bodily harm arising from the distress.

As MPPs, we have a responsibility to speak out against discrimination and to fight intolerance. As the representative of the riding of Eglinton-Lawrence, I stand up on behalf of my constituents to speak up against intolerance and hatred in all of our communities. I stand proud to be a member of the McGuinty government that stands with our Jewish community, and all communities, to fight anti-Semitism and hatred and to build an inclusive society where everyone in Ontario can live with dignity and respect.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Paul Miller: Well, I'm just going to fly by the heels here. The member isn't here for a statement.

I just wanted to make a comment about yesterday. There was a statement made in the House by the economic minister and the member from Flamborough about all the jobs and all the great work they're doing in Hamilton.

I'd just like to talk about Max Aicher, which employed about 250 people, ex-1005 members. That deal was created when I was at Stelco, long before 2007, and that deal was in the works already, so it wasn't new jobs they created. All they did was transfer some of the guys who were laid off to work in those two plants, which was the 1210 mill and the bloom and billet mill, which I worked in. So I'm well aware if those were former employees who were just reinstated because they'd been laid off. But there are still 900 guys—900 members are still locked out in Hamilton that they haven't done anything for. What they have done is help the company next door, which is a non-union company, but they've done nothing for the union company, which is the former Stelco.

So we're very disappointed in their efforts in Hamilton. Those jobs were already there, and they're taking credit for them and they shouldn't be, because those mills have just started up again over a period of seven years. They were laying dormant, and Max Aicher waited for a downturn in the economy to start those jobs again, and that's how it happened. They simply bought it off US Steel. So, once again, they're claiming something that they didn't do.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BUILDING FAMILIES AND SUPPORTING YOUTH TO BE SUCCESSFUL ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 FAVORISANT LA FONDATION DE FAMILLES ET LA RÉUSSITE CHEZ LES JEUNES

Ms. Broten moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 179, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act respecting adoption and the provision of care and maintenance / Projet de loi 179, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille en ce qui concerne l'adoption et les soins et l'entretien.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'll make my statement during ministerial statements.

FARADALE FARMS LTD. ACT, 2011

Mr. Martiniuk moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr46, An Act to revive Faradale Farms Ltd.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

ONTARIO ONE CALL ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR ONTARIO ONE CALL

Mr. Bailey moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 180, An Act respecting Ontario One Call Ltd. /
Projet de loi 180, Loi sur Ontario One Call Ltd.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

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Mr. Robert Bailey: Ontario One Call Ltd. is a corporation currently operating in Ontario. Ontario One Call Ltd. provides information to excavators and homeowners about the location of underground infrastructure.

This act would require that persons or entities specified in the act become members of the corporation and provide information to it. When a member of the corporation receives information about a proposed excavation or dig, the member is required to mark the location of this underground infrastructure that is in the vicinity of the excavation or dig site, or indicate that this infrastructure will not be affected by the excavation or dig. The act creates offences for failure to comply with the act or regulations made under it.

MOTIONS

ADJOURNMENT DEBATES

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding late shows.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed. Minister?

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move that the late shows standing in the names of the members for Wellington-Halton Hills, Nepean-Carleton and Durham be deferred until Tuesday, April 19, 2011.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members have heard the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ADOPTION

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: There is nothing more critical to a child's well-being than knowing that he or she will always have a place to call home.

At any given time in Ontario, 18,000 children and youth are receiving services from children's aid societies. Roughly 9,000 of them are crown wards in the care of the province. These kids come into the care of a CAS for a variety of reasons, but they all have one thing in common: Their best chance of success is with a safe, stable and permanent family to call their own.

Unfortunately, 75% have access orders that, for more than 30 years, have legally prevented children and youth from being eligible for adoption. At the same time, we have so many prospective parents who long to bring a child into their lives to love and support.

That is why I rise in the House today to introduce the Building Families and Supporting Youth To Be Successful Act, 2011, because as a government we must make it easier to bring these children and these parents together.

C'est la raison pour laquelle je prends aujourd'hui la parole devant l'Assemblée pour déposer la Loi de 2011 favorisant la fondation de familles et la réussite chez les jeunes. Parce que, en tant que gouvernement, nous devons faciliter la réunion de ces enfants et de ces parents.

Together with other initiatives being announced today, we're taking an important step toward improving the lives of children and youth in the care of a CAS and making it easier for Ontario families to adopt a child. These amendments to the Child and Family Services Act would remove the legal barriers I mentioned earlier that prevent crown wards from being eligible for adoption. This will make a difference in the lives of thousands of kids who want forever families, who want to come home from school and hug a mom or play catch with a dad.

Adoptive parents and prospective adoptive parents have also told us that finding reliable information, no matter what adoption system they're interested in—public, private or international—is a challenge. With this in mind, we will provide online information that is easy to navigate and guidance about all types of adoption so parents know what option is right for them.

To match adoptive parents with Ontario children who need a permanent home, we will double the number of adoption resource exchanges, forums that help match adoptive families with children needing adoption, from two to four across the province.

Pour jumeler les parents adoptifs aux enfants de l'Ontario qui ont besoin d'un foyer permanent, nous doublerons le nombre de conférences d'échange des ressources en matière d'adoption.

We know that adoption home studies should be completed in a time frame that is clear and without delay. We will reduce the wait-list for home studies and establish timelines.

We will train all CASs to ensure aboriginal children are cared for and stay connected to their culture and traditions through customary care. In fact, customary care will be the central part of the discussion we will be having at a summit on aboriginal child welfare at Fort William First Nation next week.

While we aspire to secure permanent homes for every child in our care, we know that, for some, adoption may not be in their future, and we need to support them into adulthood. Think about it: We know that almost half of Canadians in their 20s live at home and enjoy all the support that comes with that. Yet right now, a youth who leaves the care of a CAS is not allowed to come back for services. The act, if passed, would allow those youths whose CAS care or customary care ended at age 16 or 17 to return to their CAS and be eligible to receive benefits until age 21. We will also make it easier for a youth receiving financial support from a CAS to go to college or university by exempting that income from the OSAP assessment.

These are important steps, but we will work to do more. We have seen many innovative approaches from CASs and we want to build on them. Some CASs are currently providing targeted subsidies to make it possible for families to adopt children in care. We will seek their advice and that of other experts and consider how we can best build on this experience across the province in a fiscally neutral way.

We began transforming the child protection sector and strengthening adoption in 2006. Thanks to the hard work of children's aid societies, fewer kids are now coming into care and more kids are getting the chance to succeed in a permanent home.

Nous avons commencé à réorganiser le secteur de la protection de l'enfance et à renforcer l'adoption en 2006. Grâce aux efforts inlassables des sociétés d'aide à l'enfance, moins d'enfants sont sous notre responsabilité. Par ailleurs, un plus grand nombre d'enfants ont la chance de réussir dans un foyer permanent.

Last year, we increased adoptions in the public system by 21% over the year before. With these proposed changes, we strive to increase that number.

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to call on all families in Ontario to consider whether they have room in their hearts and in their lives to give a child a forever family. Today, I call on all members to support this

important legislation that will improve the lives of thousands of kids and families across this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I welcome the opportunity to respond to the minister as she tables this piece of legislation today. In conversations I've had with the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, they've been asking for legislation to remove barriers to allow for crown wards in the province to be adopted for years and years and years. So while I am pleased that we are now finally seeing some action from this ministry on this issue, I would have hoped that we could have seen something sooner.

I had the opportunity to meet with a member of the Expert Panel on Fertility and Adoption who spoke to me about the tracking of access orders within the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. Their report, you must remember, was tabled almost two years ago. It's not a matter of we didn't have the information, we didn't have the details—I believe we could have acted quicker on this. I believe that you could have responded sooner.

At any given time in Ontario, as the minister pointed out, there are, on average, 9,000 crown wards in the system. However, last year only 993 crown wards were adopted. It is primarily because these access orders were not being reviewed in a timely manner that so few crown wards were ultimately able to be adopted. The children's aid societies have families who are screened and wanting to adopt these children, but the review process for access orders was slowing them down.

Because of the access order process, crown wards are turning 18 and aging out of the system without the opportunity for a permanent family.

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It was actually back in 2006 when the Child and Family Services Act was amended to say that access orders should be terminated when children become crown wards. Here we are, five years later, and access orders for crown wards are still an issue, with your ministry saying that the courts have slowed down the process.

I trust that you've spoken to your colleague the Attorney General to discuss ways to streamline the way that access orders are administered and terminated in Ontario. I look forward to seeing this within the bill.

While I look forward to reading and debating this bill, I have to question the timing. Adoption reforms were recommended in June 2009, as I said, by the Expert Panel on Fertility and Adoption, which your government commissioned almost two years ago. I am hoping that you are tabling this bill today because you believe in the work of the expert panel and what they've done and not just because the plight of crown wards was highlighted in a number of media reports last fall. I also hope that you're engaging the individual CASs in this process. They are the ones on the front line with these children and talking to potential adoptive parents.

I find it interesting on page 2, when you make reference to reducing the "wait-list for home studies and establish timelines," because the reality on the street is

that many, many families are being told, “Just pay for your own home study. Just do your own home study, because we don’t have the time or the resources to do it.” To ultimately talk about establishing timelines—I’m going to be fascinated to see how you can actually translate that into legislation.

Of course, probably the most glaring admission that we don’t see in this amended act is any indication of special-needs children. We all understand that the vast majority of children waiting for forever families are actually kids with special needs, and there is no acknowledgment and no solution in this act. Instead of the platitudes that were coming from the minister when she was responding to those questions today during the media conference, I would have hoped that there would be more action on the special-needs file and the ability to assist those children as they move forward, finding their forever family.

I’m happy to debate it. I’m looking forward to it. But there are some errors and some omissions in what I see brought forward today.

Mr. Michael Prue: At the outset, I should inform the minister that this morning I was given a seventh critic portfolio, and it’s this one.

The NDP welcomes the introduction of this new legislation. I want to take some time to study this inch-and-a-half- or two-inch-thick correspondence and legal stuff.

In August 2009, the Expert Panel on Infertility and Adoption released its final report, and those statistics are absolutely staggering. The report estimates that, in 2007-08, of Ontario’s 9,400 crown wards, a mere 9% were adopted. The system did not and does not operate the way it should. In fact, it operates the opposite: It keeps children trapped in temporary and uncertain circumstances.

The consequences of this mess are staggering. The expert panel report states:

“Former crown wards who age out of the system are less likely to finish high school, more likely to become parents themselves at a young age, more likely to be users of the mental health system, more likely to require social assistance, more likely to rely on homeless shelters, to experience poverty as adults and more likely to be in conflict with the law. The long-term costs to society when children do not have permanent homes are staggering. The human costs, in terms of personal suffering and unfulfilled potential, are heartbreaking.”

We listened intently today in this Legislature and we listened intently in the news conference that preceded it, and we in the NDP are concerned that some of the most fundamental recommendations of the expert panel’s report seem to be missing from the legislation. Perhaps I’ll find them in a schedule buried far and deep, and I hope I do.

The minister seems to imply that the provincial adoption agency will be a website. We welcome information, but that is not what the expert panel recommended.

We are concerned that at some point the fragmented nature of the system has to be addressed. We are concerned that subsidies that were talked about by the expert panel are not being dealt with, even though we know that this is a huge barrier and the expert report offers a way forward. We are concerned that the expert panel talks about the need to provide ongoing financial support to families who adopt. It makes sense for the children, and it provides the financial stability that families need in order to be permanent caregivers for these children.

I have watched for the last three and a half years while my colleague MPP Paul Miller from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has worked tirelessly to bring this issue before the Legislature to protect the temporary care assistance that grandparents should be receiving when they care for their grandchildren. Over all these three and a half years, my colleague the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has been working with grandparents to fix the definition of “temporary” in the program so that the supports for these children who need them are there. We wonder, and I hope when I read it that this bill finally corrects the terrible practice the government has followed.

We also see the need for greater oversight of adoption agencies, and we are mindful of what has happened in Cambridge over the last year. We are mindful that families wanting to adopt foreign nationals—mostly children from Ethiopia, in the case of Cambridge—were taken for some \$420,000, and 400 families are without their funds and without the children they had hoped to adopt. We hope that somewhere in the body of this bill there is something that will prevent such occurrences in the future.

To close, we believe that the expert panel was right. We need to create a provincial adoption agency with a local service presence. I hope it’s in the bill. We need to develop tools to manage the adoption system. I hope we find those in the bill. And last but not least—and this is always a bugaboo—we need to provide adequate funding that supports the realities of adoption. If this bill does not have that adequate funding, it will not be the kind of meaningful bill that the people here in the gallery are expecting.

PETITIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It’s now time for petitions.

Mr. John O’Toole: Thank you, Mr.—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Burlington.

LANDLORD AND TENANT BOARD

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Age before beauty, I guess.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we demand that the LTB filing fee of \$170 be reduced to \$45, which is the same amount that tenants

have to pay when they file with the LTB. This is symptomatic of how the Legislature has bias against landlords in favour of tenants.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"I am in favour of the LTB filing fee of \$170 being reduced to \$45."

I agree with the petition, and I will sign it and give it to page Travis.

NON-PROFIT HOUSING

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas tenants living in Toronto community housing deserve to be treated with dignity and respect by all levels of government; and

"Whereas tenants have fears that their homes may be sold and the services to maintain those homes privatized to the lowest bidder;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the government of Ontario do all things necessary to halt the privatization and sale of the homes in which we live; and further,

"That meaningful consultations take place between the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the affected tenants to ensure that our voice is heard and our interests protected in this vital area of public housing."

I am in agreement, and will sign it and send it down with page Leighton.

1540

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thought you had somehow forgotten about me. I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas ... wind turbine developments have raised concerns among citizens over health, safety and property values;

"Whereas the Green Energy Act allows wind turbine developments to bypass meaningful public input and municipal approvals;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment revise the Green Energy Act to allow full public input and municipal approvals on all industrial wind farm developments and that a moratorium on wind development be declared until an independent, epidemiological study is completed into the health and environmental impacts of industrial wind turbines."

I'm pleased to sign it, support it and give it to Emma, one of the pages here.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt.

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning, a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients"; and

"Whereas," since October 2009, "insured PET scans" are performed "in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens" of northeastern Ontario.

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Sydney to bring it to the Clerk.

PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas supported-living residents in southwestern and eastern Ontario were subjected to picketing outside their homes during labour strikes in 2007 and 2009; and

"Whereas residents and neighbours had to endure megaphones, picket lines, portable bathrooms and shining lights at all hours of the day and night on their streets; and

"Whereas individuals with intellectual disabilities and organizations who support them fought for years to break down barriers and live in inclusive communities; and

"Whereas Bill 83 passed second reading in the Ontario Legislature on October 28, 2010;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government quickly schedule hearings for Sylvia Jones's Bill 83, the Protecting Vulnerable People Against Picketing Act, to allow for public hearings."

I obviously support this petition, am pleased to affix my name to it, and give it to page Rafah.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'ai une pétition des gens de Nickel Belt et de Sudbury.

« Attendu que la mission du commissaire aux services en français est de veiller à ce que la population reçoive en français des services de qualité du gouvernement de l'Ontario et de surveiller l'application de la Loi sur les services en français;

« Attendu que le commissaire a le mandat de mener des enquêtes indépendantes selon la Loi sur les services en français;

« Attendu que contrairement au vérificateur général, à l'ombudsman, au commissaire à l'environnement et au commissaire à l'intégrité qui, eux, relèvent de l'Assemblée législative, le commissaire aux services en français relève de la ministre déléguée aux services en français;

Ils demandent à l'Assemblée « de changer les pouvoirs du commissaire aux services en français afin qu'il relève directement de l'Assemblée législative. »

J'appuie cette pétition et je vais demander à Devon de l'amener au greffier.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

"Breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

"Problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners' Liability Act (2005) and to implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types."

As I am in agreement, I've affixed my signature and give it to page Sydney.

TAXATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt. It's very short.

"We the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the honourable member, notwithstanding what may be written in a petition, of the use of names in this chamber. I would remind all members that if they have a petition that specifically lists a name, that they have to use the proper title.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Okay. I didn't think I had said anything.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Be it resolved that the Premier immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax (HST)."

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr. John O'Toole: I have another petition here that I think is important—and I'm going to find it. It reads as follows:

"Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and a duty to protect the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier government to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permit process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries; and

"Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to prevent contamination of the Oak Ridges moraine," specifically at Lakeridge Road and Morgans Road—and I'm afraid there may be other locations.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt:

"Whereas the Ontario Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, is not allowed to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints in the areas of hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children's aid societies and retirement homes; and

"Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not allowing their Ombudsman to investigate any of these areas; and

"Whereas people wronged by these institutions are left feeling helpless and most have nowhere else to turn for help to correct systemic issues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Grant the Ombudsman the power to investigate hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children's aid societies and retirement homes."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Rafah to bring it to the Clerk.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas PC MPP Bob Bailey has introduced a significant tax credit for farmers who donate agricultural goods to food banks, to help provide tax relief to farmers and assist local food banks; and

"Whereas stagnating economic growth and increasing unemployment over the last two years have strained the ability of food banks to support Ontario's most vulnerable citizens; and

"Whereas over 25 million pounds of fresh produce is disposed of or plowed back into Ontario's fields each year while local food banks across Ontario face an uphill battle as they struggle to assist those most in need; and

"Whereas PC MPP Bob Bailey's 'A Bill to Fight Hunger with Local Food' provides an inexpensive and common-sense solution to a critical problem for Ontario's most vulnerable;

"Whereas if the McGuinty Liberals truly support a healthy Ontario and wish to fight poverty, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should immediately pass MPP Bob Bailey's bill;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call MPP Bob Bailey's private member's bill, Bill 78, the Taxation Amendment Act (Food Bank Donation Tax Credit for Farmers), 2010, to committee immediately for consideration and then on to third reading and implementation without delay."

Of course, I agree with this petition. I will affix my signature and send it down with Leighton.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

"Breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

"Problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners' Liability Act (2005) and to implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types."

I have affixed my signature and give it to page Devon.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas PC MPP Bob Bailey has introduced a significant tax credit for farmers who donate agricultural goods to food banks, to help provide tax relief to farmers and assist local food banks; and

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"Whereas stagnating economic growth and increasing unemployment over the last two years have strained the ability of food banks to support Ontario's most vulnerable citizens; and

"Whereas over 25 million pounds of fresh produce is disposed of or plowed back into Ontario's fields each year while local food banks across Ontario face an uphill battle as they struggle to assist those most in need; and

"Whereas PC MPP Bob Bailey's 'A Bill to Fight Hunger with Local Food' provides an inexpensive and common-sense solution to a critical problem for Ontario's most vulnerable; and

"Whereas if the McGuinty Liberals truly support a healthy Ontario and wish to fight poverty, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should immediately pass MPP Bob Bailey's bill;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call MPP Bob Bailey's private member's bill, Bill 78, the Taxation Amendment Act (Food Bank Donation Tax Credit for Farmers), 2010, to committee immediately for consideration and then on to third reading for implementation without delay."

As I agree with the bill, I affix my name thereto.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRONG COMMUNITIES THROUGH AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 FAVORISANT DES COLLECTIVITÉS FORTES GRÂCE AU LOGEMENT ABORDABLE

Mr. Bartolucci moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 140, An Act to enact the Housing Services Act, 2011, repeal the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 140, Loi édictant la Loi de 2011 sur les services de logement, abrogeant la Loi de 2000 sur la réforme du logement social et apportant des modifications corrélatives et autres à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I will be sharing my time with the member from Etobicoke Centre. But before I start, I want to thank the honourable Donna Cansfield, the member for Etobicoke Centre, the parliamentary assistant, who has had carriage of this legislation from first to second reading, to committee, to clause-by-clause, to studying the amendments, bringing it back for third reading, and will be in charge of this during the third reading debate. I, on behalf of the people of Ontario, just want to say thank you so much to her for her dedication, her determination and her diligence to the task.

At the same time, I want to thank the opposition critics, the member from Burlington and the member from Parkdale-High Park. I don't know how they're going to vote on this legislation, but I do want everyone to know that there was a full debate on this legislation, that we not only heard the amendments from the other side, we listened to the members on the other side with regard to the intent of the amendments. At the end of the day, I think the people of Ontario should be very confident that this bill had a full hearing, that there were public consultations before the legislation, that there was public debate during the public hearings, and that people

offered amendments. I'm very thankful for the opportunity to speak about our government's proposed Strong Communities through Affordable Housing Act, 2011.

This proposed legislation provides the foundation for our new long-term affordable housing strategy, which will transform housing and homelessness services in Ontario for years to come. The most significant part of this strategy is that it puts people first. It's about what best suits people, as opposed to what best suits government departments. Instead of complicated and restrictive housing services, we are changing the system to better meet people's needs. Instead of several programs with different rules and too much red tape, we will have a much simpler housing system for people to access and also provide more opportunities for people to build a better future.

Through this new strategy, housing resources will be used more effectively, more efficiently and with more accountability, and tax dollars will be used more efficiently in both good and lean economic times.

This strategy will better meet the unique housing needs of local communities, be it in large cities or in rural communities, in the various regions across the province. Through this strategy and the proposed legislation, we are renewing our commitment to work in collaboration with our housing partners, who will have such an instrumental role in meeting the housing needs in Ontario's communities.

As Neil Hetherington of Habitat for Humanity said about our government's work on this initiative, "Thank you for your leadership and this meaningful consultation process and your desire to build a better Ontario. We support the initiatives in so many ways. We support the affordable housing strategy that has been put forward by the government, and we applaud that."

In developing our long-term affordable housing strategy, this partnership with local housing providers has been front and centre. As Sylvia Patterson, the general manager for housing and long-term care for the regional municipality of York, said, "We applaud the province for the process that we've engaged in. It has been meaningful. As well, we believe that we've had an effective stakeholder engagement process to inform the bill."

Through extensive province-wide consultations, we talked to those who use and deliver housing services on the front lines. We heard about the specific challenges that face different communities. While we heard lots of different perspectives and ideas, there were some fairly consistent themes that we heard about Ontario's housing strategy. We heard that it was far too complex. It does not adequately address unique local housing issues, so it needs to be much more flexible to take into account different local priorities. The Social Housing Reform Act limits what local housing providers can do. And we heard that the federal government needs to get more involved and provide long-term support for affordable housing.

Over the last few weeks, the proposed legislation was before the subcommittee of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy. This was another opportunity for Ontar-

ians, housing providers and organizations to provide their views and comment on the proposed legislation. The comments from the many diverse participants suggested that our government is on the right track with this legislation.

I want to acknowledge all those municipal representatives, housing providers, housing organizations and Ontarians who attended these committee hearings and provided valuable input about the proposed legislation and Ontario's long-term affordable housing strategy. Their contributions have helped to shape the strategy and the proposed legislation and they have helped ensure that it will truly meet the housing needs of Ontarians.

As the strategy moves forward, we will continue listening to and learning from our housing partners. We respect their knowledge and their expertise, and I am confident that by working together we will make great strides in the months and the years to come.

I am very proud of our government's approach to developing this housing strategy and the proposed legislation. But this determined commitment to work with Ontarians, municipalities and housing providers was not always there. If we turn back the calendar, we see that previous governments reduced funding to housing by transferring the responsibility to municipal governments, and this transfer didn't include much in the way of any sustainable investment in affordable housing or listening to the concerns of local governments that were delivering the services. The previous government said that they wanted to get out of the housing business, and their actions reflected that. This changed with the McGuinty government.

We understand that safe, affordable housing can help Ontarians build a strong future for their families and their communities. We know that affordable housing can help people break the cycle of poverty and give them a solid foundation to build a better future. The McGuinty government got Ontario back into the business of affordable housing. Our major investments in affordable housing have made an important difference in the lives of hundreds of thousands of Ontarians.

I am proud of our record, which includes:

- investing in the repair and construction of more than 270,000 units of affordable housing;

- providing more than 35,000 rent supplements that are helping low-income Ontarians pay their rent;

- a loan program through Infrastructure Ontario that has saved non-profit and co-operative housing providers \$13 million; and

- providing \$430 million in annual operating funding for housing and homelessness services, which includes, among a number of important programs and services, the province's rent bank, which has helped more than 23,800 people avoid possible eviction and stay in their homes.

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These investments and programs paint a very clear picture that the McGuinty government strongly supports affordable housing. Even as Ontario faces significant global economic challenges that have had a major impact

on the provincial budget, our government did not remove a single penny of these funds earmarked for affordable housing, and despite these challenging times, we continue to work very hard to find ways to support our most vulnerable citizens.

Even with our government's record investments in affordable housing, we know that there is still more work to be done. As we heard in our housing consultation, Ontario can do better, and our government agrees. The long-term strategy and proposed legislation focuses directly on what works best to help people, neighbourhoods and communities.

As Peter Hume of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario said, "Bill 140 turns the page on an era of housing delivery that, in our opinion, just didn't make sense."

Instead of outdated rules and rigid procedures, the strategy focuses on giving those who deliver housing services more autonomy and flexibility. Local service managers, those who deliver the services, will have a more active, strategic role in developing local solutions to the particular challenges in their communities. The proposed legislation, if passed, would support this community-centred approach where housing services are much more flexible, and this approach would allow us to do a better job of helping people in need.

Streamlining the current patchwork of more than 20 housing and homelessness programs, which operate independently of each other and with their own set of rules, is one of the key ways to improve services. Consolidating these programs, beginning with five homelessness-related ones, will give municipalities more flexibility to use funding to meet local needs.

The example I like to use is, instead of being forced to use money for a shelter bed, which could, in fact, be more expensive, provincial government funding could be used to provide more stable, affordable housing, and the remaining funds could be used to provide additional social supports where needed. Here is a way our strategy would provide better services and use taxpayers' dollars more effectively, and, most importantly, put people first.

We've worked hard to remove heavy-handed restrictions and barriers found in the current legislation. For example, we propose to amend the Planning Act to require municipalities to establish secondary suite policies, which would provide more affordable housing options.

We are also strengthening accountability and responsibility through this proposed legislation. We are setting out key provincial interests that must be addressed, along with local priorities, in new local housing and homelessness plans that would need to be developed. The intent would be for these local housing and homelessness plans to complement other local planning initiatives, such as the official plans, infrastructure plans and human services plans. And when developing these local plans, there would be a requirement to consult with the public and with community housing partners.

To ensure accountability, municipalities would need to report annually to the public on the progress being made

under these plans, and we will monitor progress at the provincial level as well, through province-wide performance measurements. By measuring results, we will ensure that the strategy is on the right track and that Ontario's tax dollars are getting results.

While our government is proud of this strategy and the proposed legislation, we will continue to work with our partners to deliver better housing to Ontarians. However, there is one partner that needs to get more involved, and that's the federal government. In the past, Ontario has often partnered with the federal government on housing initiatives. For example, in 2005, the McGuinty government and the federal government signed the biggest affordable housing agreement in Canadian history. However, current federal funding is either short-term or declining, and federal funding does not always represent a fair share for Ontarians on either the basis of population or core housing needs. This is apparent, for example, in the proposed federal funding allocated for the residential renovation and rehabilitation program and the related suite of programs. Canada is the only G8 country that currently does not have a national housing strategy. The lack of long-term, sustainable funding limits the ability of housing providers to plan long-term and fully participate in capital projects that build more affordable housing. In fact, the federal government is decreasing housing funding to municipalities by more than \$166 million over the course of the next 10 years.

Part of our strategy is to work with our federal, provincial and territorial counterparts to join our collective efforts to engage the federal government. The province is working with the federal government to come to an agreement on extended funding, and that includes working to ensure that we get our fair share. The federal government needs to be a full partner, and long-term, stable funding is critical to our ability to support Ontarians in need, now and in the future.

So our government's investments in affordable housing have had a real, positive impact all across Ontario. As Iain Angus, the chair of the District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board, said, [we] "commend this government on its leadership in responding to the complex and changing housing needs of Ontario's most vulnerable citizens."

I am confident that with this strategy we are giving communities far greater and better tools to address housing and homelessness issues for years to come. This is another way our government is committed to building better communities, helping those in need, and making Ontario a greater place to live.

I will now pass it over to the honourable member from Etobicoke Centre and my parliamentary assistant, Donna Cansfield.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm pleased to stand today to support the proposed Strong Communities through Affordable Housing Act, 2010. This proposed legislation, as part of Ontario's new long-term affordable housing strategy, is another significant initiative of our government, and it's taken to support Ontarians who are in

need. The long-term strategy builds on the remarkable work achieved under the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review, with the province uploading the municipal share of social assistance benefits.

A consensus recommendation coming out of the review was that the province and Ontario's municipalities should work together to build locally managed housing services, services that better focus on positive results for people and simplify the delivery of income-assistance supports.

Ontario's poverty reduction strategy, another one of our government's key initiatives, also identified affordable housing as a key issue. The poverty reduction strategy also concluded that the province needed to work with its housing partners to make it easier for families to find and to maintain affordable housing. Our government then launched province-wide consultations to further hear from those using and delivering housing services. I'd like to commend the member from York West, Mario Sergio, for his work in this initiative, as he did the major consultation prior to this bill.

Throughout this consultation process, our government was clearly committed to working inclusively with the people of Ontario, with local governments and with our housing partners to come up with a comprehensive solution—and comprehensive solutions—to the challenges in our province. As we developed a sound, wide-ranging strategy, it provided a solid base from which to rebuild the affordable housing system.

Over the past few weeks, I've had the privilege, along with my colleague Lou Rinaldi, to again hear from many of our housing partners who participated in hearings held by the subcommittee of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy. The committee heard many clear and thoughtful presentations about the proposed legislation and also about Ontario's new long-term affordable housing strategy. We heard from non-profit housing and co-operative housing organizations and providers, from tenants and homeless advocates, the municipal sector, and from those who build our homes, the builders. We heard about different ways to enhance the legislation. We heard what was good about the bill, and we also heard where there might be gaps that need to be addressed. These presentations provided valuable insight into Ontario's housing system and some very important food for thought.

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As expected, there were many different views that were presented and, of course, not everyone agreed with each other. The ideas that were brought forward to the committee, however, have helped to strengthen the proposed legislation. This will help make our strategy work even more effectively for housing providers, for local communities and, most importantly, for Ontarians who need to use housing services.

The amendments reflect input from our municipal partners and from our housing stakeholders. We've added two provincial interests: supporting economic prosperity; and promoting environmental sustainability and energy

conservation. Local service managers must address these interests in their local plans.

The committee also made several amendments to the legislation affecting the remediation process between municipal service managers and social housing providers. The new provisions passed by the committee incorporate the principles of procedural fairness and foster a favourable resolution of disputes. After hearing some stakeholders at committee express concern over the preservation of social housing assets, the committee amended the language of the legislation to provide additional scrutiny at the provincial level by providing the minister with authority to consent to most sales of social housing projects.

But overall, there was a general sense that this proposed legislation and the new housing strategy were important, positive milestones and that we are heading in the right direction to build a better housing system. At the committee hearings, the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association, which represents municipal and social service staff, said that "Bill 140 is the most significant change for housing and homelessness in Ontario since the province downloaded social housing responsibilities to service managers 10 years ago." Those who were around a decade ago and working in the sector know full well what sorts of challenges the downloading created.

The Social Housing Reform Act, 2000, which was to guide and implement the transfer of social housing, was too complicated, too prescriptive and placed too many administrative burdens on those delivering the services. So our government has been working hard, together with our housing partners, to find solutions for the problems caused by this short-sighted approach. We've aimed to develop legislation and a housing strategy that reflect the current realities of the housing system. Our strategy recognizes that local service managers have developed the capacity and the experience to manage and deliver affordable housing services and supports, and they don't need all of the restrictions that have been placed upon them.

Also, at the committee hearings, the Ontario Home Builders' Association, which represents the residential construction industry, spoke in "strong support of Bill 140" and our long-term housing strategy. The association noted that they strongly endorsed "the inclusion of secondary suites in the strategy," as you heard the minister say, and stated, "We applaud the province for their efforts to enhance affordable options." That is so critical to all of those who need housing in this province. It really provides added benefits.

Currently, some municipalities do have restrictions on secondary suites, and in some cases they do not even allow them at all. Through our housing strategy, we are seeking to address this matter and are proposing to amend the Planning Act to require municipalities to establish policies allowing second units in new and existing developments. This amendment would provide more affordable options for lower- and moderate-income households and for elderly parents or for live-in care-

givers. This change would add to the range of planning and financial tools that municipalities currently have at their disposal to help them develop more affordable housing. Municipalities have the local expertise and have always shown leadership in addressing the need for affordable housing in their communities. Now our government is working to support them even more so through Bill 140.

At the committee hearings, the proposed Strong Communities Through Affordable Housing Act was also called “a historic piece of legislation” by the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association. This is an association representing 760 non-profit organizations that provide housing in 220 communities across Ontario. In addition to providing many interesting thoughts and recommendations, the association also recognized that “this government has clearly demonstrated a commitment to the non-profit housing sector with its investment over the past eight years in both new housing and capital repairs.”

The minister spoke about our current fiscal environment. Our government is very proud of our history of making major investments in affordable housing. The minister did provide some of the highlights of our record investments in his remarks.

We know that in a perfect world, we would continue to increase our investments in affordable housing, but the simple reality is that we’re dealing with the ramifications of a global economic recession. Governments everywhere are experiencing higher demands for social supports while, at the same time, dealing with a lower base of revenue. We only need to look to the United States to realize that, in terms of their employment, it’s only come back by 15%. When you go to the United Kingdom, it’s only back at 47%. However, we are at 91%, with 84% being full-time jobs, but we’re just beginning to realize the impact of the recession on getting our jobs back.

Ontario is making good progress in its recovery, but as you hear, we are faced with some very tough decisions. As a province, we need to ensure the sustainability of public services, we need to tackle the deficit challenge and we also need to protect education and health care.

Our government knows we need to streamline government services, but still make them more responsive and work better for the people of Ontario. That is exactly what we’re doing throughout the long-term housing strategy.

We know that the housing system needs to be fixed, so we developed a strategy that will rebuild it from the ground up. The long-term strategy in the proposed legislation provides a very strong foundation from which to begin fixing the problem: to make housing services more accessible and effective by putting people first.

We aim to do more and we aim to do better with the resources we have now. Our housing strategy provides the right direction for how to use future investments.

We will continue to engage the federal government to reverse its trend of short-term and declining funding for affordable housing and create an affordable housing

framework for Canada that includes long-term, stable and flexible funding. This is an absolute prerequisite for all Canadians. I had the opportunity to speak with folks from a number of different provinces, and each and every one of them spoke of the need for the federal government to step up to the plate with a national housing strategy. Getting the federal government back to the table and getting them to commit to long-term stable funding is something that many Ontarians and stakeholders understand is absolutely critical if we want to provide more housing, and more affordable housing, in our province.

There are many key aspects of the long-term strategy in proposed legislation, including the streamlining of numerous provincial housing and homelessness programs. I have to say that we should be very proud of the work we have been doing here in Ontario with the homelessness to homes transition.

I recently had had an opportunity to speak with some folks from Edmonton, and they’ve actually taken our project and are replicating it for the homeless in Alberta. They realize that the work that we’ve been able to accomplish and the fact that there are some 2,900 people now who have transitioned out of homelessness into homes also means they have the support services they need that are critical to sustain them as they grow back into being a part of society. It keeps them out of our ERs and out of our hospitals, and actually gives them the tools and supports they need to live a full life.

Developing our local housing and homelessness plans, such as we have identified with this pilot, is critical to our strategy: enhancing accountability mechanisms, establishing a local review process for social housing decisions and, of course, providing tenants with more opportunities to build personal assets and become more self-sufficient.

The collective result of these reforms is to give people in need better access to housing services, services that will be more tailored to their needs and provide better opportunities to get ahead.

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When we talk about all these different parts of our housing strategy, I know it can sound a bit technical. I think it’s important to put that human touch on why reforming the housing system really, truly matters.

When we talk about streamlining housing services and fixing procedures, I think it’s also important to remember that more efficient processes can actually help more people living on the street who might suffer from addiction or mental illness, or it can help people with disabilities who need a home where they can have the necessary supports to live independently and also with dignity. It can also help children who come from families living in poverty and who really need a helping hand so that these children might have the opportunity to thrive in their years ahead.

I’ll give you an example with Habitat for Humanity. They have actually built 1,800 homes. They have very few defaults on these homes, and their record is that every child who has lived in a Habitat for Humanity

home has gone on to post-secondary education: either college, university or training. It speaks to how important a home is to a child for security and for the ability to further their education.

The stable home is the foundation for a strong family, and strong families mean strong communities. That's why the McGuinty government has developed this long-term housing strategy, and that is why, from the very start of this process, we've always tried to focus on: How do we put people first? By updating and modernizing the current system of housing and the homelessness supports, we are creating a system that focuses on better outcomes for our families and for individuals.

Years ago, people only thought of the homeless as being an individual, typically a male, on the streets, but I remember that when we first got involved with Beatrice House there were 1,000 homeless families on the streets in Ontario—1,000. Through this strategy, we can make a difference in their lives and provide those children a place that is secure, that gives them hope so that they in turn have a future.

The housing investments will be targeted more effectively to address the different housing needs in different communities. It won't be a "one size fits all" approach. By enhancing access to stable and affordable housing, we can promote better outcomes related to health; education, as I said; community building; and ultimately our economy.

I would once again like to thank all the Ontarians—members of the public, tenants, municipalities, housing providers and housing organizations—and also the members across the way who contributed so much to shaping the proposed legislation and Ontario's new long-term affordable housing strategy. Your efforts, your commitment and your willingness to work with us to build better communities are greatly appreciated. It really is an essential part of what makes Ontario a great place to live.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I know that we get two responses to this one, but I'm most interested in waiting for the member from Burlington, who served as mayor and is a chair of Halton region. She knows first-hand how bad it has gotten.

I suspect, when I hear the language from the member from Etobicoke Centre doing the work of the minister, and probably quite good work, in fact—but it sounds like their strategy is to blame Stephen Harper. That's what I heard. Really, if she understood the history of Canada Mortgage and Housing, how they devolved it down during the Liberal era—they devolved housing and the financing of housing down to the province and then down to the municipalities. That has been the last 15-years' story on housing.

I have a peculiar interest in this, and I hope to share the time with the member from Burlington this afternoon, because if you look, there's an excellent report called *Where Is Home?* I hope that you've seen it. This is

written by the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association. It's an independent, objective look at something that you failed at. Just get away from this blaming Harper for everything that's not working. Take some responsibility for the last 10 years. I'm beginning to call it the "lost decade." Everything they touch seems to turn to mush.

Hon. John Gerretsen: This is rich, the Tories speaking about affordable housing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mr. John O'Toole: You know, I can't—the former minister, a former mayor of Kingston, knows himself how poorly things are going—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order, Minister.

Mr. John O'Toole: That's why he's probably not going to run.

Now, if you look at the vacancy rates, that's the real proof here. The rates of people who are on the waiting list have doubled. You should be ashamed.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Okay. Let's take a breather.

Questions and comments? The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: I guess I'll be voice of reason here. I'd like to thank the member from Etobicoke Centre and the member from Burlington and the member from Parkdale–High Park. They all worked hard on this and, naturally, it fell a little short with some of the things we would have like to have seen. Our critic was, you know, happy about some things but not happy about a lot of things.

The NDP welcomes some of the components of this bill but agrees with housing groups that it lacks appropriate funding targets and timelines needed to help Ontarians struggling with housing insecurity, unaffordability and homelessness. The NDP will take a hard look at this legislation, as should all Ontarians, and we will push the government to make the bill stronger and more effective, if possible.

The hundreds of thousands of Ontarians without affordable housing need to be addressed, and all Ontarians who want safe, inclusive and productive communities deserve no less. I could just say that part of the information that wasn't in the bill, which made me very unhappy, was the fact that I fought for three years for grandmothers who adopt their grandkids or take their grandkids in, and the restrictions are still there; they haven't been changed. We certainly would have liked to see those changes made, and it didn't happen.

I would certainly keep pushing to help grandparents who bring up their grandkids, because they're doing yeoman service for our province. I think they deserve the financial help. I mean, they should at least get the same as foster parents or other organizations that support kids. I don't see why grandparents get a quarter of the money monthly when they're on fixed incomes and they're stepping up to the plate to keep their families together. I

would have liked to see more of that in there, and I didn't.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Just a couple of minutes to add my comments to those of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the member from Etobicoke Centre. I just want to go back a bit. When the former minister started the process of consultation, I did attend some of those consultation meetings. I had a couple in my own riding on my own, and then I fed the information up to the ministry.

During the consultation, we heard a lot about some of the financial circumstances that, frankly, the world was under. One of the things we heard loud and clear from the service delivery folks—and I'm talking, in this case, about upper-tier municipalities—was, "Give us some tools for us to work." It's not all about money. Yes, money certainly buys happiness, as the saying goes. But they had a lot of resources that were, frankly, put in a straitjacket and they could not use them—we formed these pillars.

I think that on that component we made a long, long stride. We've heard from those housing providers. I know from the ones in my riding of Northumberland—Quinte West, both from Hastings county and Northumberland, that those are some of the things they really welcome, because I know that with what they have, they can go a lot further.

I'd be remiss a little bit if I don't comment on what the member from Durham said about the lost 10 years. Well, I was in municipal government when they downloaded this stuff with no money attached. They downloaded this stuff and never bothered looking back. I see some of the members on the opposite side who were in municipal government when that happened. It wasn't a pretty sight. It wasn't a pretty sight. You know, it takes a while to climb up the ladder, but we're getting there.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join the debate this afternoon on third reading of Bill 140. I must say that earlier, when my colleague from Durham was giving a response to the speech from the minister and the parliamentary assistant, the Minister of Consumer Services, the grandfather of the eco tax, came flying. My God, someone must have given him a Red Bull; he was just wound right up. I hope that when I'm talking he will allow me to make a point.

1630

But, folks, as everyone will tell you across this province, it's about time this government started to do something with respect to the non-profit housing sector. I want to read something from Where's Home?, the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association report. Interesting: "In ONPHA's 2010 waiting list survey, families and non-senior singles were the largest category of households waiting for assisted housing, accounting for over 77% of

the 141,635 households on waiting lists. Seniors accounted for the remaining 23%."

Because of the decline in employment in manufacturing in Ontario, the unemployment rate was 9.2% in December 2009. And you have to ask yourself, who's responsible for the unemployment rate in manufacturing in the province of Ontario? Well, the people on the other side need look no further than themselves and, as my friend from Durham says, stop blaming Stephen Harper. My goodness gracious.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Stop blaming Steven Harper for your failures—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order. Both ministers come to order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —to operate a successful program in non-profit housing.

The other thing you failed to do: You're talking about a 10-year plan, but you're not attaching the funding. You're telling municipalities to come up with the plan, but there's no money to assist them to do that. Speaker, another Liberal election bill promise.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I really don't like to interrupt speakers to bring the House to order, but I may have to do it the next time.

The member for Etobicoke Centre, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm more than pleased to be able to respond, and I thank the members for their interjections.

It's really nice to have a voice of reason, actually, from the member from Burlington as we were having the conversations during the committee hearings. I know in the past that she has indicated that regional council applauds the province for addressing this issue in affordable housing; she actually stated that from Halton. She also participated in rent-geared-to-income and said that it was about time that the government—and applauded, again, the government. That's the kind of work where, by working together, we can actually make a difference: by recognizing, from the municipal side, the need to move forward on something as significant as housing.

There was no intent for me to blame anybody for the housing issue, especially at the federal level. The intent was a recognition that all of us need to accept some responsibility for those who need housing in our communities, whether that community is in British Columbia, in Wawa or in downtown Toronto. All of us in a civil society have a responsibility to work with and find solutions for those issues dealing with homelessness in our community.

So I applaud the member from Burlington for her support, certainly in the past and currently. I also thank the member for High Park, who put forward a number of amendments when we worked together in support of the bill.

I'd like to say to folks in the House that it's time for to us find some solutions. Please support this bill as we

move forward working with our municipalities, working with our housing providers, working with the people who are homeless to find homes, so that in fact their lives can be different and far more productive than they have been in the past.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity to be able to respond to the critics and ask them to support this bill as we move forward in third reading.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I want to start by thanking the member from Etobicoke Centre for the kind of work that she did on this bill. I know that she came into it later and that a lot of the work had been started, but I want to commend her for the kind of attention that she did pay to the detail in the bill.

I also want to say that this piece of legislation has been a long time coming. There were some great expectations, something that Ontarians, especially those on the waiting lists, industry experts and, I think, all the providers and the service managers and the members of this House—I mean, we were all anticipating what might be in this bill, and we were very happy to see it finally tabled.

So this long-awaited bill that everybody was looking to support, at least until they were able to get back on their feet—I'm talking about the people on the waiting list—the affordable housing plan and this legislation offer just the fine, tiny baby steps moving towards what might be an overall plan, but it certainly doesn't go far enough. It will not eliminate the 142,000 people who are waiting on Ontario's social housing wait-list, and it will still leave many Ontarians hoping and waiting for more help.

I anticipated so much from this plan. I was delighted that the government spent all the time that they did to have the important consultations with many sectors across this province. This is a process that is often rushed through and sometimes avoided altogether by this government, so it was really nice to see them take that part of the process seriously.

Through the consultation process, the ministry listened first-hand to those who knew what was wrong and what was broken with the system. The end result, though, was a little disappointing. For all it set out to be, that was an opportunity missed when we finally received the legislation. For all the talk and anticipation of the long-awaited housing report and this piece of legislation, it sure wasn't the 10-year long-term housing plan that we all expected. This government boasted about the consultations that took such a long time travelling across this province, listening to all the heart-wrenching stories. They even delayed the release of the long-awaited plan because they said they wanted to "get it right" and were doing more consultations. They boasted about the stakeholder involvement.

We had only two days of deputations at the committee, but they were filled with stakeholder recommendations addressing how the bill could be strengthened and

what was missed altogether. They came to tell us what this missed opportunity was.

After that, we had 100 amendments presented at committee. However, the disappointment was that we only had 24 hours to review these 100 amendments. I felt very rushed, and, given the importance of this bill, it was very disappointing to see the time that was allotted to really look over these amendments and do them any justice. There were 24 hours to decipher what these amendments were trying to achieve, who the amendment would affect, how it would affect the individuals or organizations, and then we had to determine the merits of these amendments.

I will tell you that maybe on the minister's side 100 amendments in 24 hours is not an enormous amount of work, because there's a lot of human power that would go into it. However, I know that for myself and my colleague, 100 amendments in 24 hours was a gruelling task and quite frankly disappointing. I know my colleague the member from Parkdale-High Park mentioned this at committee, and my colleagues on the government side did seem a bit surprised that it was only a 24-hour period. So I want to commend my colleague from Parkdale-High Park for getting this very important point on the record.

I should also add that not only were 100 amendments in 24 hours difficult for the opposition parties, but it was extremely difficult and a big strain on the stakeholders. The stakeholders took the time to prepare these tremendous and very informative deputations for our committee, they took the time to come and present them and to answer our questions and concerns, only to be rewarded by trying to filter through 100 amendments in 24 hours and to see if theirs did or didn't make it to the clause-by-clause review. That gave them almost no time to connect with various offices and plead their final chance as to why their amendments should or should not be supported. I know that in my office, we were receiving emails right to the last moment. The whole process begins to erode the democratic process. We just weren't allotted the proper time to deal with this very important issue and follow up properly.

1640

I would suggest that this government really needs to sit back and take a long, hard look at how they are working with municipalities. While the members opposite claim that this bill was aimed at giving municipalities more autonomy, our party put forward some amendments that were presented by our municipal stakeholders, and the government opposed them. It would behoove the government to ensure respectful partnerships with municipalities. The municipalities are doing all the heavy lifting in this case, and they're also carrying the freight in this bill.

I was surprised that the municipality-friendly amendments were opposed by government members. For example, the legislation expects that a 10-year homelessness and housing plan, which we thought this was going to be, and which now needs to be produced by the service managers—they expect that this plan will be produced by

the service managers and be ready by January 1, 2012. AMO addressed this in their deputation and, in turn, asked that the legislation include that the 10-year homelessness and housing plan not be expected until January 1, 2013. I don't think that was an unreasonable request. Creating a 10-year plan on an issue such as this, of this magnitude, takes a long time.

We know it's a task that the government originally said they would undertake, and then, when they introduced the bill, and we were all surprised—no, I think we were really shocked that the responsibility had shifted down to the service managers. I introduced an amendment that would have put the timing of the 10-year plan into this legislation so that there would be no questions, and there would be predictability about an expectation date of January 1, 2013. There would have been the necessary time for municipalities to adjust to this responsibility which they were not expecting and make sure that they could do the best to fit the needs of their own community. Just because this government likes to rush through things, as they did with the committee process of this bill, it doesn't mean they should put the same pressures on municipal service managers.

I want to read a quote from AMO's deputation with respect to the timing of the housing and homelessness plan. This is the quote:

"The current expectation is that all service managers will be ready to go January 1, 2012. We think the government should consider a phased approach. Some municipalities have the planning capacity that can get under way and meet the bill's timeline. Others will need to build or find capacity, which, of course, will take a bit of time."

They continued to say, "Devolution occurred over a nine-month period; so too must this approach be afforded an appropriate time to succeed."

The government is more than familiar with the vast differences between rural and urban, northern and southern, and large and small municipalities.

AMO says again, "Municipalities want to get this right. We are accountable to our taxpayers and the residents of affordable housing in our communities. Appropriate time is needed to transition to this new way of doing business."

Municipalities each have their unique needs and capacities, and we must ensure that they are allotted enough time to meet the needs.

With respect to timing, AMO also addressed that municipalities cannot budget or plan in the absence of knowing what funding options there will be. I will quote from AMO again as I feel they really did a good job in expressing their concerns to our committee:

"The consolidation of over 25 housing and homelessness programs is an underlying concern with the local planning approach. The government must understand that municipal councils cannot plan or budget in the absence of knowing what envelope they will have to spend from for these consolidated programs."

AMO continued by saying, "It is my understanding that the consolidation exercise is partially under way, but

certainly far from being completed. However, local planning cannot be substantially completed or maybe even started until the consolidation exercise is complete and municipalities understand what funding will be available."

AMO is, of course, referring to the ability that service managers are given in this piece of legislation to have the flexibility to use funding for the five homelessness-related programs to best meet their own needs. The current programs are as follows:

There's the consolidated homelessness prevention program. This program helps those experiencing or at risk of homelessness to find and maintain stable housing.

Then there's the emergency energy fund program, which helps prevent homelessness by reducing the risk of households being evicted due to energy arrears.

The emergency hostels program, which provides short-term lodging and a temporary personal needs allowance until an emergency situation is resolved.

Then there's the domiciliary hostels program, which provides permanent housing which supports vulnerable adults who require limited supervision and support with daily activities.

The rent bank program provides outstanding rent directly to landlords on behalf of tenants who, due to emergency or other unforeseen circumstances, are in short-term arrears and facing eviction.

Currently these programs are allotted funding without flexibility, meaning that the allocated funding is to be spent only within each program. This piece of legislation allows funding to flow from one program to another as service managers see fit to best serve their community needs.

The consolidation of these programs needs to be done right. The government needs to ensure that they get it right, because otherwise it could mean destabilizing the entire system. As you can see, there is a lot of work to be done and a lot of decisions to be made before service managers can even begin to put together their 10-year plans.

Further to my point, there's very valid reasoning as to why the government should have supported my amendment to have the date set to January 1, 2013. I want to address another important amendment that I put forward in the clause-by-clause committee process. Subsection 4(1) of the bill lists several matters of provincial interest that a system of housing and homelessness should have. For example, "it is a matter of provincial interest that there be a system of housing and homelessness services that,

"(a) is focused on achieving positive outcomes for individuals and families....

"(g) is co-ordinated with other community services;

"(h) is relevant to local circumstances;"

This is just to name a few.

What I thought was lacking from the piece of legislation was that there was absolutely no mention of the role of a youth-specific program. I think that this is a vital component of a housing and homelessness plan, and

it should be included. Some youth need homelessness accommodation, and I'm disappointed to say that the government did not approve my amendment. Although there was some discussion that they would consider—consider—putting something into legislation down the road, it will, of course, remain to be seen.

The NDP did support my amendment and they themselves put forward several amendments which would have included a system to address crown wards and their needs. These amendments were also opposed.

I want to again, as I did in committee, strongly encourage the government to put something into this legislation that addresses youth-specific programs. We heard many deputations that advocated for this, and I must say that all three parties were quite receptive, so I'm a little baffled as to why my amendment was not supported.

1650

I just want to remind everyone here today about the deputations we heard from individuals who have experienced first-hand the lack of youth-specific programs. Certainly, the central theme was that the lack of safe and affordable housing for youth puts them at extreme disadvantage and prevents them from advancing in life. These youths have already faced many challenges and barriers, such as dysfunctional families. They really, really need someone to stand up for them and ensure that there is some programming so that, in their times of need, the support they need is there. It's an investment for all of us to include the role for a youth-specific program in this legislation. I hope to see something coming forward in the imminent future.

I also just mentioned that while section 4.1 sets out 10 areas of provincial interest, this section does nothing to link housing and the province's interests in health and the economy. I addressed this in my previous debate. Michael Shapcott, the director of affordable housing and social innovation at the Wellesley Institute and co-chair of the Housing Network of Ontario, said, "Poor housing is directly linked to poor health." We heard the same thing from the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association at the committee hearings. I'm going to quote Keith Ward, who said, "Studies have documented the dramatic, positive impact of safe, decent and affordable housing. These confirm what we all know intuitively: Without a real place to live, it is next to impossible to make everything else in your life come together as it's supposed to." He continued to say, "This section," referring to 4.1, "should reflect the province's interest in contributing to positive health and education outcomes for Ontarians and to economic growth." I certainly agree with that. I can't see that anybody else in this House couldn't agree with it.

I was really disappointed to see that this government's long-term affordable housing plan did not include a housing benefit. Although they did make mention of it in their plan, it only said that they could not afford it at this time, and there was nothing further mentioned. I continue to support a move in this direction, as do a long list of industry stakeholders. A housing benefit would help both health and economic outcomes, because it gives people

the flexibility to live where they work and have support systems. That may mean close to work, so that they aren't incurring transportation costs. It might mean in a community close to their children's schools. Regardless, it allows people to have the flexibility to make decisions that serve them best, and in turn, they are happier, healthier and certainly more productive. I feel that a housing benefit is something that adds to the emotional stability of a family's being able to carry on their normal daily life without worrying about whether there's a roof over their head, being able to engage in meaningful employment and being able to stay near support systems in a place where they can be supplemented for their rent.

I will also reiterate that I think it is a far better way to go than to continue to build more structures in places where people have move away from their own support systems and the familiarity of their local community. I think we ought to be investing in people, not just bricks and mortar. To be clear, the idea of a housing benefit is not a long-term support for people. It is there just to help as they need it and will remain until they are independently stable. It's a temporary bridge to get them back on track.

Another point that I want to address is this government's constant dependency on federal funding. They're using the condition for federal funding as a complete cop-out. Regardless of federal funding, the province has a responsibility and a huge interest to fund important programs like housing. We saw this with the poverty reduction plan, whereby the success of the plan is almost entirely dependent on the federal government, and then again with the introduction of the long-term affordable housing plan, also dependent on the federal government.

As I mentioned in my second reading debate, the federal government has been very vocal in saying that they are getting out of the housing business. How many times do we have to hear this? The province knew this long ago, going into the process of developing this long-term affordable housing plan, yet they still say they want federal money. In 2009, even the Ontario Auditor General called on the housing ministry to develop a plan to deal with the "federal step-out." How much more warning do you need?

This government has had seven years to work out something, which, evidently, they have not. As we are all aware, there were no funding commitments to housing in the 2011 budget; again, just a mention that the federal government needed to continue to be our partner.

Bill 140, however, tries to download provincial liability under the federal housing agreement to the municipality—a big risk. The municipal stakeholders were quite clear that this was unacceptable and that section 103 of the bill should be removed altogether. I proposed an amendment that would have done just that, but again, it was rejected. This leaves municipalities liable for any and all costs in the federal agreement. This leaves them vulnerable to that cost, and that cost is totally unpredictable.

As I mentioned in committee, having come from a municipality, understanding how vulnerable they are to

these added costs, it's not acceptable to me that this section of the bill remains. I had hoped that the government would accept my amendment in good faith, particularly to continue to foster the relationship with municipalities.

Bill 140 has omitted the ability for a household to request an internal review of a negative decision with respect to deferral of rent-geared-to-income. Under the former Social Housing Reform Act, households had the ability to request an internal review. I put forward an amendment that would have restored the ability for households to request an internal review of deferrals; however, the government did not support it. My colleague from Parkdale-High Park put forward a similar amendment to section 156, and it was also turned down.

The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs indicated that they feel it is preferable that decisions with respect to deferral of RGI are at the discretion of the service manager, and that there is nothing in the bill that precludes them from agreeing to a voluntary review of these deferral decisions. My thoughts are that if the right to request a review was possible under the former Social Housing Reform Act, it should continue to make sense that that same right remains in this bill. As my colleague from Parkdale-High Park pointed out, while the parliamentary assistant to the minister says that there is nothing precluding service managers from reviewing these decisions, there is also nothing in the legislation that says that they should review these deferral decisions.

I know that we see a lot of autonomy for municipal service managers in this piece of legislation. That's in comparison to the Social Housing Reform Act. I proposed an amendment that would have done just that, but again, it was rejected. This leaves municipalities liable for any costs in the federal agreement. This was concerning to many of our deputants.

There are several examples where the requirement for ministerial consent was removed. I'm encouraged that the government made some efforts to restore some of their oversight responsibility. The housing ministry is, after all, responsible for housing in Ontario, so it only makes sense that they should have some oversight responsibility. They have already passed down the responsibility of creating this 10-year plan. Clause 32(a), for example, was amended to reinstate certain ministerial requirements before shares in the local housing corporation could be issued to the private sector. As an example, clause 34(a) is amended to require ministerial consent before an amalgamation involving a local housing corporation could take place.

1700

A number of deputants came and presented amendments to section 157 of this bill. The section refers to reviews that can be requested by a housing provider. In the current bill, what can actually be reviewed is left to be determined by—guess what?—regulations. As I mentioned in committee, the devil is in the details, and the devil is the regulations. It would have been reasonable to

include what housing providers can request to be reviewed right in the legislation. I believe the government should have supported an amendment and this would have happened.

I think this would have made the legislation far more predictable. I have always been of the mind that when a lot of the detail of a bill is left to the regulation-making process, a great deal of additional things get slipped in, things that often go unnoticed. And do you know what? Regulations are not scrutinized by the public. They're done somewhere far away, and they just appear. The regulations are created away from the public, with no ability to offer real insight and expertise from those front-line workers who know where the regulations will fail if not developed correctly.

Putting these important points into the legislation as opposed to leaving them to regulations—it behooves us to get this right for people, and people will not be involved in regulations. If there is nothing to hide, then I do not see why sections like 157 of this bill cannot be defined right in the legislation. It is more transparent, everybody knows about it and it's up for discussion. As you know, there are no discussions with respect to regulations. I will certainly be watching for these details in the regulations.

I will wrap up, as I know that I'm going to be sharing my time with my colleague from Durham, who also wants to speak to this bill. But there's still a lot of work to be done, and I would have hoped that the government would have accepted some of the opposition amendments to strengthen this bill, because that's what they were meant to do.

We were so happy to see the coinciding long-term affordable housing plan released, but again, it missed what it was originally set out to do. This bill and the plan certainly were a long time coming, and let us not forget, there was a curious delay as well.

The plan does absolutely nothing to reduce the social housing wait-list, which is currently hovering around 142,000 people. This bill does nothing to eliminate the list, either. I think it is a real disappointment that the government side has mismanaged our finances so much that we cannot even talk about investing in a housing benefit. This would be an incredibly valuable program, completely focused on people.

I certainly hope that this government is going to support the service managers as they go through the gruelling task of preparing a 10-year housing and homelessness plan. They need to give service managers the required information about how the money will flow from each of the current homelessness programs, and they need to do that as quickly as possible.

Lastly, I would strongly encourage this government to take the advice of the Auditor General and prepare their own plan to deal with the federal government's "step-out of the housing programs," and without any federal funding whatsoever. It is not acceptable to continue to deflect everything to the federal government.

As I mentioned in the beginning, this piece of legislation was an opportunity missed. We all had great hopes,

but at the end of the day there's still a lot of work to be done before we have a foolproof housing plan that will accommodate all Ontarians in need.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to thank the member from Burlington for the work that she's put into it and, also, respectfully, the courteous and generous way that she represented the member from Etobicoke Centre's work on Bill 140. I'd have to concur that there was a lot of work put into it.

I think the member mentioned as well that the member from Parkdale-High Park, the NDP representative on the committee, also submitted many amendments in frustration.

Let's kind of go back to square one on this. I want to start by saying that we support the bill, but I also want to put that in a frame of reference: We really have no option but to move forward.

All of the independent commentary that I'll refer to today shows what a complete sham—this purports to be doing something, but it's disingenuous. It is not doing what it purports to do. That's the typical thing that we find here. Once you open up the jewellery box, you find out the jewellery has all been taken. It's a little like when you hand someone that diamond ring box, and you open it up and it's empty. That's exactly what it is.

I'm going to legitimize my opinions on this, Mr. Speaker, with your kind indulgence. I'm going to just sort of—there have been a lot of very specific comments with respect to the amendments that were made and the amendments that were ignored.

Here's the real test of their legislation. Bill 140 came as a genesis of the long-term affordability housing plan, long-awaited. The thrust of the plan seems to be a hand-off of the difficult work to local service managers, but there's no money. There's not one nickel to improve the abhorrent wait-lists or for families that don't have housing for up to 10 years, who are waiting for supportive housing.

In fairness, I'm going to read some things that are independent, and I always like to go right straight to the Liberals' briefing notes. This is from the Toronto Star. It's not our leader, Tim Hudak, who is very supportive of building that important social infrastructure.

This is a true report right here. It says, "Affordable Housing Strategy to Simplify Onerous Rent Rules"—landlords and tenants; that's what the Toronto Star says. "Scores of complicated rules governing rents in subsidized housing will be eliminated or simplified as part of Ontario's long-awaited affordable housing strategy, the Star has learned.

"The proposed strategy, being unveiled by Housing Minister Rick Bartolucci in Hamilton Monday morning, will be accompanied by a new housing act to be tabled in the Legislature."

There have been hearings, and they are saying, if you read some of the stakeholders, many of whom were disappointed—this is what I have learned. In fact, let's put that into context.

There was a quote here from Malcolm Hunt. He's the Peterborough city planning director. The member from Peterborough often refers to his great respect in the time he spent there. Here's what Malcolm says: "It proposes greater flexibility for service managers to make decisions about housing. It does not give us more money, but it gives us more flexibility locally." I almost see the grin on his face when he says it: lots of flexibility, no money. You can't do anything. The member for Peterborough has to stand up for that community. He's simply not doing it, obviously.

The amendments were all turned down. It's my understanding there were hundreds of amendments—all turned down. The member from Burlington, I thought, spoke respectfully. There was no anxiety in the House at the time. But we're levelling with you now: You didn't get it done. You aren't getting it done, and it's just before the election.

This thing is going to be implemented through regulation, and there isn't a minister over there who has any input into the regulations—not any.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: The nice minister over there—I don't want to be unkind.

Here's another quote; this is a recommendation from a report. I'm trying to keep abreast of this issue because I know they just downloaded it to the municipalities without one nickel. This is the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association's recommendations to the budget, and here's what they said.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: There's not a nickel in there.

Here's what they say. I'm quoting from page 1 of that submission, recommendation number 1: "With the introduction of Ontario's long term affordable housing strategy (LTAHS) and Bill 140, the government is poised to bring about significant changes to the housing and homelessness sector. In particular, the greater flexibility" to be granted to the local managers "will allow for more effective planning and creative problem-solving.... Service managers are encouraged by the policy direction of Bill 140 and look forward to working with the government in the development of the legislative details, regulations, and implementation policies."

1710

They'll be waiting a long time, because there isn't a nickel in this. It says here, "Noticeably absent in the strategy however, is a commitment to sustainable funding for the homelessness and housing sector. Without the tangible financial resources to enable program delivery and improvement, program success will be diminished. Ontario's municipal governments already provide considerable investments into the housing and homelessness sector, and look to our provincial partners for the necessary support to maximize the LTAHS's effectiveness."

So they're basically all saying that it's a hand-off. They're all saying, "Show me the money."

Let's put this into a frame of reference at the Premier level. They ran on a program—I'm going to my real

notes here, the ones I wrote myself. Their plan in government—just looking to follow up on, when someone promises, how they delivered. They had the poverty reduction task force. Now, I would put to you, Mr. Speaker—you've had quite a bit of time here—and to the member from Burlington, who's had quite a bit of time as a mayor, a regional chair and as an MPP, that we all know the important infrastructure of shelter and housing for poverty reduction strategies. I have spoken on this—in fact, I meet with people in my riding and try to be an advocate on their behalf. But when you're dealing with someone who says one thing and does completely the opposite—it's the diamond ring box. Open it up, "Oh, the diamond's been taken." The poverty reduction task force is just one example.

The aging-at-home strategy is another example. They're all strategies. Aging at home—there's no home care. They meant to say "aging alone." That's what they meant to say.

There's another one here. They actually stepped in a little while ago into regulating retirement homes.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Finally.

Mr. John O'Toole: See, they don't get—long-term-care homes are funded by the province. In fact, long-term-care-home funding per bed is \$48,000. Seniors today are being—that's what it costs. Look in your budget. Now, in retirement homes, there's not one nickel of provincial money—not one nickel. In fact, they're going to cause the price to go up because now they're going to have standards, which is agreeable, but there's no money for it. So who's going to pay for it? The residents.

Here's what long-term care for them is: You pay.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, it's \$48,000. You haven't created any long-term-care beds, but you've created retirement beds. How convenient.

Now, retirement homes today—and this is for the viewer at home—many of them are very good. I went into quite a few of them, actually, when my mother-in-law was looking for a home. She moved out of her home because she was becoming frail, but still a wonderful woman. And they're mostly women, so this is an unkindness to women as well.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a direct assault, I would put to you. There's no long-term-care beds being built.

Here's the deal. The average cost of retirement homes—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: You'll get your time. The average cost of retirement homes—do you know what they are? Are you interested in learning anything? Listen up and you'll learn something.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mr. John O'Toole: The cheapest ones that I've found are about \$40,000. There's no care. There's meals, clean bedding, housekeeping, electricity, heat, hydro. Those

will all be going up, because when electricity goes up, they'll be paying more. When heat goes up, they'll be paying more. Now that they've got regulations in, they'll be paying more. So it's \$40,000, up to about \$70,000, for a retirement home. Not one nickel of Premier McGuinty money—not one nickel. So when they discharge you from the hospital—in fact, a lot of people over the years have convalesced in hospitals. Now they have a strategy: It's called the wait-list strategy, which is early discharge. They're discharging you from hospital—it's called early home. They've got some name for it from the LHINs. Here's the deal: Quite honestly, they're discharging people to their home. There's no home care, or there's a few hours of home care, and then they say, "Well, you should go into a retirement home." Well, to get \$50,000—the seniors are listening now—out of your RIF or your LIF; to get that \$40,000 or \$50,000 to spend on that rent for your long-term-care bed, because you're paying, you have to take about \$75,000 out of your RSP, because it will be taxed, see? So don't let them fool you. Aging at home is a shell game.

The strategy is a shell game as well for the poverty reduction task force, because shelter is the most important fundamental requirement in infrastructure and what they're doing is handing it off to the municipalities. It's shameful. In fact, I'm going to try to stick to my notes, because I've become quite engaged in this and concerned about how people are getting the wool pulled over their eyes. The only thing I've heard as an excuse for why they can't do it is that it's Stephen Harper's fault. That's what they say: "It's Stephen Harper's fault." I heard them say it, both the Speaker as well as the member from Etobicoke Centre, who's a wonderful person. She should have been Minister of Education, to be honest. I knew her when she was involved in education. She was excellent.

"The bill comes on the heels of the government's long-awaited report. The thrust of the plan seems to be the handoff of difficult work to local services. The bill speaks in the language of making housing services more flexible and relevant to communities, a laudable goal, but does little to reform the existing system, which is in disarray and does nothing to support community housing services. Arguably, they're already underfunded." They heard that from all the deputants, all of them, and have done nothing.

No province in Confederation spends less on housing than Ontario. It's like tuition. They all talk about education. We have the highest tuition in Canada. How come the people aren't getting onto this stuff? The highest tuition, education minister. They're spending more on PD days than they are on special-needs children.

Ontario holds approximately 152,000 families who are waiting an average of 10 to 12 years or more for affordable housing—10 to 12 years. The children will be growing up in poverty.

Look at the economy—and I've got some statistics on this, too. In their economy, they've had an average of 9% unemployment. People on social assistance or employment insurance: That is about 3% to 4% higher than the

average over the previous 10 years. I'm not even politicizing it; I'm saying, "That's the evidence."

When you look at the evidence, affordability in housing right now is also a serious problem. I'm saying that 50% of all tenants in Ontario pay over 50% of their income in rent today, some as much as three quarters. That's not sustainable; certainly if they're unemployed or have a job loss.

The bill contains, as I've said many times, no funding, no housing targets or real guidelines to the service managers. In fact, I say this; this came up during the hearings. In this bill, the government abdicates an enormous amount of responsibility over community housing to local service managers. We heard from the member from Burlington, our critic and a person I have great respect for, that those 100-plus amendments over two days, we were given 24 hours to read and interpret the implications of those amendments—and, in fact, create them—and all of them were voted down. They aren't listening and weren't listening.

This bill was first introduced on November 29, 2010, and I read that one. This is the more recent, amended version of the bill: 97 pages. On March 8 it received second reading, and we're in the midst of third reading now. This thing is done.

Now, if you look at the bill—Mr. Speaker, this is important, and you know this too from your years here. This bill, the way it's structured, I believe there are 15 sections to it? Yes—there are 12 sections. Now, if you look at it, every one of the sections—this is the tragedy of it all. It will never see the light of day. Even the members here won't even get any word in on it, government or opposition. It's all being dealt with in regulations. In fact, you can read section 1. I can read the very first section and everything would be done in regulations by some—but there's no money in it, see? This will take a long time to implement. It's another stall mechanism.

1720

I thought the amendment from the member from Burlington was a very, very reasonable amendment, because they had given the service managers a deadline of implementation of January 1, 2012. It's already 2011. Actually, April, May—they can't get this done. The member from Burlington moved a reasonable amendment—nothing outlandish or controversial—to give it one more year to implement it properly. No.

Then, in the middle of all this discussion on this important issue of housing, there's an election. Now, they're going to go to the election and they're going to say that they've made this great step forward—moving forward, which is which is a term they use all the time. It's absolutely shameful.

Several times in committee, government members declined to provide housing benefits or unit guidelines. There is a certain disrespect inherent in the bill that claims to provide housing services while abdicating responsibility for the very topic they're talking about. They're handing it off. Everybody is saying that, even the reports in the media. I could read lots of them, but they

haven't given me enough time here to speak. I may ask for more time. I may, but we'll have to see. I like to make sure I finish. Often, I run out of time.

If there's no place in the budget for substantive action on social housing, then the intellectually honest thing to do would be to say as much. Don't try to tell people something that isn't accurate. It conveys contempt for Ontarians when the government clothes this admission in the disguise of a comprehensive policy. Man, oh, man, some of the words here—I've been here 15 years and I'm starting to read between the lines quite a bit here. Show me the money. All these grand—look, if you're not going to do it, don't try to give the illusion that you're doing it. It's almost like Houdini is in cabinet over there.

The government's retreat from accountability is not just a funding issue, it's also an issue of principle. Many times in committee, government members declined to add guidelines or definitions to assist in provincial oversight of local housing projects. They call it flexibility. I would say, "Who cares?" That's my own word here. "It shows disrespect" is a more appropriate way to phrase that.

Not only is the government offsetting the problem, it is refusing to be involved in the decision-making process, or indeed even making guidelines available to service managers. They fast-tracked this thing. There's no time to get it right, to even take an active role in directing any sort of housing policy. So they've done all these consultations and they come up with a fancy long-term affordable housing plan, but you open it up and it's the diamond ring box: You open it up and there's nothing in it. What a tragedy. They get away with it. I don't understand how they get away with it. It's just beyond me. How many times can you be fooled?

Look, if I'm wrong, stand and up refute it. I get so full of anxiety because I'm trying to stand up for my constituents in Durham, as is the member from Burlington, the member for York North, our leader, Tim Hudak. They criticize us for being so direct and so frugal. Well, we know that if we're wasting money, it's actually the taxpayers' money that we're wasting.

Certainly, the bill doesn't make life any easier for housing providers in the community, or, more importantly, their citizens who need respect and to be treated fairly. You can criticize us all you want. This is your bill. It doesn't get it done. In fact, everything I've read from all the social housing—I could get off onto more notes here if you want. The co-op housing—what they said about it. We heard what the municipal social services sector said about it: "It's a shell game." Basically, that's what they said.

Here's the one I said earlier, Where's Home? This is from the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association. I should read some of the statistics in here, which would really set you free.

I read the Toronto Star article, and here's another one here from the housing network. It fails to meet the five basic tests set out, says the housing network. It fails completely the five basic tests in housing. That's basic-

ally what's repeated throughout most of the literature on this: It fails all of the fundamental tests. Is it a social housing strategy that helps people? The answer, convincingly, unfortunately, is no. I'm trying to be kind here, because I could be a bit more ragged about it, but I'll try not to be.

Here's what the co-op housing federation had to say. These aren't my notes; these are real statements from real people. This is from the Co-Operative Housing Federation of Canada on Bill 140, their briefing notes. They're not mine but I do read what people send me. "Shortcomings of Bill 140;" I'll just read it.

Some of the good members—Mr. Phillips is retiring; a great person, he served the province well. I have a lot of respect for him. It's not meant that way. It's more or less saying, "Look, don't say you're doing one thing and do another." That's wrong. I'm not sure that he had a role in this.

"While there are a number of potential gains in the legislation that we have outlined above, the overall thrust of the new statute is to give municipal service managers more flexibility and control in the oversight and administration of the housing program. Even in some of the areas outlined above, where co-ops are hopeful for improvements, a lot of the details are dependant on what the regulations ... say." The devil is in the details, as the member from Burlington said.

"As well, in some cases, the act itself is rather permissive, giving service managers options of using their own judgment to suit local circumstances." That doesn't sound like a program with any great kind of direction to me.

"Major concerns:"

The "bill reduces authority of housing providers and gives control more to municipalities." Downloading, that's what it is.

"One of the two stated purposes of the act is 'provide flexibility for service managers and housing providers' ... Some examples where Bill 140 reduces protections for co-ops compared to the SHRA—the Social Housing Review Act—"include:

"A requirement that service manager act 'reasonably' has been removed in some places.

"The requirement that breaches be 'significant' is taken out in several areas.

"A single-year deficit versus an accumulated deficit is now considered a breach."

They go on. Co-op housing is where there's a shared ownership provision, which I think is an important one. I would be supportive of that, the pride of ownership. If we can support that in any way—ours would be to the shelter allowance side, not on the bricks and mortar side so much. That's pure flexibility. That's the flexibility that's needed. Often, people have to relocate for work, but they need a home. I think, working with them, it's evident that a lot of work has been put into this. Even the members of AMO were upset. In fact, they were quite critical in the hearings. I don't know how they're getting away with this.

I'm going to go on here a little bit more. I probably will need more time, Mr. Speaker.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No? They're not going to—I would seek unanimous consent for probably another hour, perhaps.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Again, we won't push it; no, no.

The government has declined, in this bill or in any other, to engage tenancy issues in a helpful way. A number of issues facing housing providers remain outstanding in Ontario, particularly regarding the prohibitively long negotiation period for landlords seeking to remove offending tenants and the similarly drawn-out hearing period.

We heard in a question the other day how there's balance in the Landlord and Tenant Act. There's anything but balance. That's what I'm hearing today. You drive landlords out of the business because there's no reasonable balance. You've tipped it the other way now. I would say that's what I hear consistently. Landlords are reluctant to get into the business of creating rental opportunities for people in those situations. We support a more balanced Residential Tenancies Act; I can say that. Our leader talks about that all the time: affordability and options for people are important.

The bill also provides an opportunity to address other pernicious community and social issues which have not benefited from this government's mismanagement. In other words, these are people who have been left out. There's a whole group of them who have been left out. In 2009, the Premier committed to reducing poverty by 25% in five years and we've seen little progress. In fact, once again, that's where they blame the federal government. It's tiresome. The rhetoric is predictable, it's inconsistent and it's disingenuous. Everything that doesn't work—whether it's transit or Toronto or Rob Ford, it's always Stephen Harper's fault.

1730

Premier McGuinty should not take credit for anything because he takes no responsibility for anything that doesn't work. You can't have it both ways. To only take credit—it's like a spoiled kid taking credit for anything that works and blaming somebody else for everything that doesn't. Whether it's the victims of crime that's been on the agenda for four days—the Attorney General acts like a snob, like he's the only one who even cares. He's probably going to run for leader, as far as I can see. He's acting up quite a bit. He said the other day that he's the only guy who knows the right answer; that's what he said.

In fact, social assistance in this province has fallen below the rate of inflation. They take great credit in it. Long-term care: Residents of retirement homes will now pay the full cost of the residency. Long-term care in the province: \$48,000 per bed for the cost; retirement homes: not one nickel by the province—not a nickel. They regulated it. That's going to be passed on to the residents. It's actually going to increase the cost of retirement homes.

They've run out of money. Some 20% of all they're spending: They're borrowing from your future. The 10% reduction in your heating bill: They borrowed a \$1-billion bond to be able to give that rate back. It's tragic.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, you did. If you don't know, you shouldn't say anything. If you do know, then you're not telling the truth.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: John, tell the truth.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm giving it to you right here. I'll send you the documents, Lou. You're going to need them during the election. You stick to racetracks.

Our support is accompanied by serious concerns. Giving communities flexibility does not necessarily mean forgoing a role in community housing entirely, which this bill does. It walks away from it. There ought to be a balance, as many deputants in the committee noted. They were summarily ignored.

Moreover, it is our concern that there's a kind of intellectual dishonesty in the bill. By insinuating that this bill, which is presumably the result of months upon months of public policy research and consultation—all those expense reports that aren't filed, out at hotels and meals and all that—is anything new or comprehensive—Ontarians will not be fooled by this bill.

We're supporting it because the intentions are right, but there's nothing in it. There's no money. It seems that, through this legislation, the government is seeking to claim progress in community housing that it has not earned, just before an election. That should give us real pause when we consider the kinds of people we want representing us on this very important issue.

I think the work done by the member from Burlington and the member from Toronto, from the NDP side—

Mr. Paul Miller: Parkdale.

Mr. John O'Toole: —Parkdale—High Park; that's right—worked very sincerely and hard on this bill on behalf of the people who are less fortunate than all of us. What did they get in return? The reports I read say that they failed on all five points, by any measure. That's in a report that's objective and independent. I've got a copy of it here. In fact, the Toronto Star printed it, too. It says, "There are some important new ideas ... in the plan," but it fails on "five key tests set out by the Housing Network of Ontario, a provincial housing coalition."

My remark on this? You fail. It's a tragedy. You spent so much time and money on it. It's a huge bill; it's fairly large in terms of bills. You've downloaded it to municipalities, with not one nickel. You haven't given them any regulation framework to deal with. The bill itself is forcing them to have a plan by January 1, 2012, which is about five or six months away, with the election and all the disruption. The member from Burlington asked for an extension on that, and you even voted that down.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the members from Burlington and Durham, especially the member from

Burlington for adding her expertise to the committee, with her municipal experience at many levels, which is very good.

I'll just read a comment here. This is a report on what the Metcalf Foundation, the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association and the Daily Bread Food Bank say about this bill:

"According to the food bank's 2008 survey of its clients, the average food bank client paid 77% of income on rent and utilities. When people have to pay the rent, they go without food. Forty-two per cent of the people in the food bank survey said they had gone without food for a whole day at least once during the past year....

"The cost of housing is much higher in larger urban centres. Yet the housing benefit that people on welfare receive is based on the same formula no matter where the recipient lives. This proposal suggests a way to address that disparity....

"Welfare rules and practices are partly responsible for inflation at the low end of the rental market. Some landlords inflate rents to match benefits, and both the poor and the government pay for it. There are ways to change welfare practices so this can't be done so easily....

"Social housing—housing that charges rent geared to income—is a very limited resource in this province. It represents only 5% of the total housing stock and 18% of the rental units. The waiting lists are many years long.

"There is no housing-related income program to help the working poor in Ontario. Thousands of working families in our province pay over half their income on rent." We propose "a housing benefit that would extend to the working poor and help to stabilize them in the workforce. It would also create a new, transitional mechanism for people moving from welfare to low-paid work, easing the housing burden while they attempt to escape from the welfare trap."

The government's own summary of its consultation indicates that participants called for the creation of an affordable housing benefit payable to individuals. It's a shame that it's not included in this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I would like to take a couple of moments and just speak to the facts around Mr. Harper and the Canadian government. Under the social determinants of health and the Canadian facts—just let me share this with this House—housing is a public policy issue because governments have a responsibility to provide citizens with the prerequisites of health. Canada is signatory to numerous international human rights agreements that guarantee the provision of shelter. Canada is routinely identified by international authorities as not fulfilling those commitments.

So they may want to get out of the business of housing, but you know what? You can't inhale and exhale on these issues. You either believe in working for your citizens or you do not.

I haven't even addressed the whole issue around aboriginal housing, both on-reserve and off-reserve, and the

fact that if you go to the social determinants of health and the responsibility of the Canadian government—and you look at the fact that aboriginal peoples are four times more likely to be living in crowded housing than non-aboriginal. The issue there is that the life expectancy of aboriginal peoples is five to 14 years less than the Canadian population.

Does this government have a responsibility in housing? They sure do. It's part of public policy—as I said, a civil society. You must invest in your people. You must acknowledge those who have less and need to be supported, whether they're on-reserve or off-reserve, whether they come from a variety of other cultures. It's a responsibility once they land on our shores, as Canadians, to work together to find adequate and affordable housing.

And it is definitely the responsibility of the Canadian government. So I'll take it back, and I do blame Mr. Harper for not doing his job.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm pleased to rise again. I'm shocked at the member from Etobicoke's ad hominem attack on the Prime Minister. Of course, during a federal election, it seems they have imported their partisanship into this House as well.

It would appear that the provincial government is not responsible for the issue of affordable housing. They just seem to want to lay the blame at the feet of the Prime Minister. Good Lord, the alternative that we would be looking at is Michael Ignatieff as Prime Minister. Wow.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He's temporarily visiting Canada, and the member for Etobicoke wants to see him as Prime Minister of this country? Has he got a green card or a visa? What is he here on? I don't even know, because he only comes here—I think he said what he likes about Canada—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke said in an interjection that comments should be about what the speaker said. I think it's time that I would agree with him.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's a very good point, and I did say that. You picked up on that.

Well, if I go back to that, the comments from my colleague from Durham are something that I would suggest the members on the opposite side of the House pay close attention to. The one thing I'll say about the member for Durham—and I could say many things, but I will say this: He does his research. He doesn't stand up in this House and just fly off the cuff and make off-the-cuff comments or remarks. He does his homework. He does his research. He sees the gaps that you're leaving, and you're not addressing the real issue. It's election time. That's what you guys are addressing.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I had a chance to listen to the member from Burlington and the member from Durham for almost an hour.

The member from Burlington I respect a lot, and she'd know better than anybody else. She was in municipal government, and she knows exactly how much the Conservative government did download on the municipalities across the province of Ontario. They cancelled the affordable home strategy. They didn't invest much money on an affordable strategy. They didn't do anything. They downloaded ambulances and child care, the affordable homes and many different things.

Also the member from Durham—probably he forgot. He was in government when they cancelled 500 affordable homes in the province of Ontario. They didn't invest money. They opted out of the investment in affordable homes.

I'm glad to be part of this government. Since we got elected in 2003, we've invested more than \$2.5 billion in affordable homes. We fixed and also built more than 60,000 units and created more than 50,000 jobs across the province of Ontario.

We're still in the game because we believe strongly in our people. We believe strongly in our responsibility as a government to support the vulnerable people among us. Affordable homes I think is vitally important for the people of Ontario, for struggling families and people who need support. That's why we keep investing in affordable homes. That's why we bring this bill forward to enhance it, to give us a chance and the ability to keep investing in affordable homes. I hope the members opposite will come forward and support this bill because this bill is important to reform and the government's ability to invest more and to continue to support the vulnerable people among us.

I know the member from Burlington spoke about her amendment in the committee. I'm glad to be part of the government. At least we have a committee. We send bills to committee. We listen to the people and we try to adjust as much as possible to support and strengthen the bills.

Again, thank you for allowing me to speak and comment—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

The member from Burlington, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I would like to thank my colleague the member from Durham for sharing my time and making the critical points he did in his presentation. I would also like to thank the members from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Etobicoke Centre, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and London–Fanshawe.

As I said in my original speaking notes, this bill was being anticipated with great hope that there would be a homelessness and affordable housing plan delivered by the province with provincial interests in there. Instead, after almost two years of consultation and developing of the plan by the staff and then a delay in releasing the plan, what happened was that an expectation of some-

thing big was created, and when the plan was delivered, it was anticlimactic. It felt empty. It felt like a hand-off. It felt like a cop-out and a pass down to municipalities, an expectation that the federal government has to pay.

Well, you know what? We have a responsibility to the citizens of Ontario as leaders and elected officials in our own province, and that's not recognized in this bill. It goes around in circles. There's no depth to it. Even though the stakeholders came and said, "Yes, thank you very much for this plan," they also said, "We hoped for more."

That's what I hope the government realizes and will be reflected in regulations that give this bill some extra depth. Things that don't appear in this bill and that should have perhaps will be seen in the regulations.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: I believe we have unanimous consent to stand down the third party lead.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Paul Miller: During committee hearings, housing advocates identified a number of serious shortcomings of the bill, and I'll give you the examples:

- its failure to set concrete targets or provide funding to ensure progress in reducing the current shortfall in affordable housing faced by many Ontarians;

- its failure to recognize access to affordable housing as a basic human right;

- its failure to protect against the selling-off of the social housing stock to the private sector, which will reduce access to affordable, good-quality housing;

- its lack of provision to allow municipalities to set the targets for affordable housing in new developments, that is, inclusionary zoning;

- its increased power to service managers, for example, to take over co-ops, which will make it more difficult for housing providers to deal with challenges and continue to provide badly needed affordable housing; and

- its lack of fair and independent process for housing providers and tenants to appeal service managers' decisions.

The NDP proposed many strong, reasonable, doable amendments to address the above omissions and weaknesses in the legislation; almost all were voted down by the Liberal majority on the committee, again. Not much was gained through any amendments except requiring ministerial approval before transfers, with some improvements to the processes of takeovers—for example, accumulated deficit language—but this government caved to municipalities on other issues.

Former UN rapporteur on housing Miloon Kothari said that without critical amendments to prioritize the needs of vulnerable groups, to include firm goals and timetables for the elimination of homelessness and to independently monitor and review progress, Ontario would fail to meet its obligations under international

human rights law to fully ensure the right to adequate housing.

Overall, we recognize the steps that this bill does take. Rent-geared-to-income rule changes, for example: Those who receive income from other sources need to report only once a year—a good improvement. There will be flexibility of waiting lists. Requiring municipalities to allow second units in existing houses, for example, basement units: That's a good proposal. But much, much more needs to be done.

I will go over the problem we face: Ontario's serious housing crisis. A book released recently, titled *Persistent Poverty: Voices from the Margins*, outlines the extent of the housing crisis: 1.3 million Ontario households are precariously housed, that is, they pay more than 30% of their income for housing; 120,000 Ontario families live in overcrowded housing; 80,000 Ontarians live in substandard housing requiring major repairs; and an additional 140,000 households are on affordable-housing waiting lists in Ontario, a number that has increased by 10% from 2009 to 2010.

Housing insecurity is rising because energy costs have gone up 50% in the past decade. Rents have increased faster than inflation. Incomes of tenants have stagnated or declined. Half of renters do not have enough money to pay for their housing and other necessities, such as food, medicine, transportation, education and so on.

The authors of *Persistent Poverty* spoke to hundreds of people struggling in poverty and insecure housing from across Ontario, people like Jacob, a young man in Toronto, who said this at a recent community meeting held by the interfaith coalition on social assistance: "A bachelor apartment costs \$600, maybe \$700 a month in Parkdale. Rooming houses are terrible. People steal your food, mess up the bathroom, get drunk and bring friends home. My socks and underwear were stolen from the laundry. How do I pay a high rent on my ODSP of \$1,092 per month? It would be worse if I were receiving just \$585 a month from Ontario Works. What am I supposed to do? Am I supposed to steal?" Why should Jacob have to face a life like this?

Then there's Harry, a middle-aged man from Brantford, who said: "If I can become homeless, there is not another person in the world who cannot become homeless. Even people who are wealthy are very close to being in poverty: one death, one broken relationship, one loss of a job. There are not a lot of choices for housing, and it often means living next to people" who are doing drugs.

This government's record on housing is abysmal. They talk about their historic investments in housing. Well, let's take a good look at the history. In 2003, the McGuinty government promised to build 20,000 new affordable housing units in three years. As of October this year, seven years later, the government will have funded only 15,000 units and built only 11,500. In other words, the McGuinty government has funded about 1,900 units a year, about one fifth of the 10,000 units a year that that housing groups say is needed to make a dent in homelessness and underhousing.

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Now they are standing by while federal funding is reduced. In 2009, the Auditor General called for the Ontario housing ministry to develop a plan to deal with the federal phase-out of funding, but the McGuinty government still hasn't got one. In fact, the operating budget for housing was cut by \$187 million this year and has been stagnant since 2003. The reality is that, in 2010, after seven years, more than enough time for the McGuinty government to do something, the housing crisis continues in Ontario. In fact, the housing crisis in Ontario is the worst of any province in Canada. According to the Wellesley Institute, one of the most respected sources of information on housing, Ontario has the highest housing costs of any province. In Toronto, one in three households spends 30% or more of their income on housing, the worst record among metropolitan areas across Canada. High housing costs force individuals and families to choose between paying their rent and mortgages or paying for necessities such as food, medicine, energy, child care, transportation, clothing, education and, of course, hydro.

According to the Daily Bread Food Bank, high housing costs are the number one reason why visits to food banks in Toronto cracked the one million mark this year for the first time ever. Worse, a record number of Ontarians visited food banks in 2010, 400,000 in the month of March alone.

Ontario also has the worst record among all the provinces in terms of affordable housing investments. Last year, again using Wellesley Institute numbers based on Stats Canada, Ontario spent \$64 per capita on affordable housing, only half the provincial average of \$115 per person. On a per capita basis, the government of Saskatchewan spent almost four times as much. Worse, the government of Ontario has downloaded more affordable housing costs than any other Canadian province. Cash-strapped Ontario municipalities lack the revenues to meet the growing housing needs across the province. Lack of access to affordable housing is an affront to the dignity of all Ontarians.

The need for action is so obvious, it's almost painful. Access to safe and secure housing is a human right. The lack of affordable housing in Ontario is no less than an assault on the human rights of our citizens. Those were the conclusions of the 2009 report by the United Nations special rapporteur on the right to adequate housing after he toured Canada and found that housing rights are being eroded here.

Homelessness and a lack of affordable housing is costly to individuals, communities, the economy, and our country and province. The Wellesley Institute outlines some of these costs in a report called *Precarious Housing* in Canada.

According to the Conference Board of Canada, housing unaffordability negatively affects Canadians' health, reduces their productivity, limits national competitiveness, and drives up the cost of health care and welfare. In fact, the economic cost to society of housing insecurity and homelessness far outstrips the cost of solutions.

In 2008, a report, *Breaking the Cycle: Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy*, stated that poverty in Ontario cost the provincial and federal governments as much as \$13.1 billion a year.

Other jurisdictions are moving ahead with well-funded affordable housing strategies, but where is Ontario in this? The British government stepped up its national housing plan with the Building Britain's Future initiative of 2009, which included a \$3.1-billion investment in new homes and ramped up support for social and private rented homes.

We know that funding from the federal government for affordable housing is drying up. NDP MP Libby Davies has been spearheading a bill to put in place a national housing plan, which passed second reading but now awaits the outcome of the federal election. The bill won the support of NDP, Liberal and Bloc MPs. It would require the federal government to consult widely with provinces, territories, municipalities, aboriginal people, community groups and private sector interests, and report back to the Commons with a comprehensive national affordable housing plan that meets the Canadian international housing rights obligations.

But Ontario can't wait for the federal government to do something. It must also act, and with an urgency that they have not shown since being first elected. It took Ontario a year to launch hearings, and it was six months late in reporting back on the hearings.

Overall, housing groups were united in what they called for in the housing strategy. The Housing Network of Ontario declaration was endorsed by Habitat for Humanity Canada, the Social Planning Network of Ontario, the Wellesley Institute and 450 other community and housing groups. It sets clear yardsticks for what needs to be included in an effective housing strategy for Ontario. It sets out five tests which include: bold targets and sustained funding, including a minimum of 10,000 affordable housing units a year; a clear measurement of progress, including specific targets and timelines for reducing affordable housing waiting times; action to improve housing affordability for low-income people, including a new monthly housing benefit; and reformed housing legislation, including stronger rent control and inclusionary zoning at the municipal level.

How does this bill measure up in this situation? Listen to what groups have to say. The Housing Network of Ontario:

"The Ontario government has proposed some new legislation and administrative procedures that are useful and important, but the essential items for a long-term affordable housing plan—targets, timeline, and most of all funding over a multi-year period—are missing. It's like they've put up the scaffolding, but then forgot to give the workers the tools that they need to get the job done.

"By the end of this fiscal year, capital funding for new affordable housing is set to shrink to zero. Investment in building new homes and repairing existing rundown housing not only helps the people living in that housing,

but also provides a solid boost to the economy, including jobs and even additional tax revenue for the government.

“The government’s promise to more effectively measure affordable housing and issue annual reports is helpful, but without specific targets, timelines and funding, it’s hard to provide accountability for results. Thousands of Ontarians took part in public consultations last year, calling for sustained funding to build at least 10,000 affordable new homes annually and better maintenance of existing housing; a universal housing benefit; support services to make housing truly affordable and accessible; changes to housing legislation; proper accountability; and clear ways to measure progress in the fight against housing-related poverty.”

I could go on but I’m running out of time. I’d just like to finish by saying that yes, the three members from all parties of this House worked hard on this, but certainly it falls short of the expectations of a lot of the groups that

deal with poverty and housing in our province. We certainly would like to see more initiatives from the financial aspect of this bill. It falls far short of the expectations of a lot of people in this province, and that’s unfortunate.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr. Khalil Ramal: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I said in my response that the Conservatives cancelled 500 units. The correct number is 17,000 units. That is a correction for the record.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Members are allowed to correct their record.

It being very close to 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 9 of the clock on Thursday, April 14.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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No. 109

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**Legislative Assembly
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des débats
(Hansard)****Thursday 14 April 2011****Jeudi 14 avril 2011**Speaker
Honourable Steve PetersPrésident
L'honorable Steve PetersClerk
Deborah DellerGreffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 14 April 2011

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 14 avril 2011

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the aboriginal prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BETTER TOMORROW FOR ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR DES LENDEMAINS MEILLEURS POUR L'ONTARIO (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 11, 2011, on the motion for second reading of Bill 173, An Act respecting 2011 Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters / Projet de loi 173, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires de 2011, l'affectation anticipée de crédits et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to the order of the House dated April 13, 2011, I am now required to put the question.

On April 6, 2011, Mr. Phillips moved second reading of Bill 173, An Act respecting 2011 Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This vote will be deferred to following question period.

Second reading vote deferred.

STRONG COMMUNITIES THROUGH AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 FAVORISANT DES COLLECTIVITÉS FORTES GRÂCE AU LOGEMENT ABORDABLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 13, 2011, on the motion for third reading of Bill 140, An Act to enact the Housing Services Act, 2011, repeal the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 140, Loi édictant la Loi de 2011 sur les services de logement,

abrogeant la Loi de 2000 sur la réforme du logement social et apportant des modifications corrélatives et autres à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: It's a pleasure for me to rise today and participate in the debate, which has been so capably handled by our critic. So we start today on Bill 140, the Housing Services Act of 2010.

I think as all of us in this Legislature know, affordable housing is a critical component of any compassionate society's social safety net, and it is certainly imperative that we provide those who are disenfranchised and those who are poor and vulnerable with the means to access housing that is both affordable and, obviously, of the highest-possible quality.

Ontario is a society that is both compassionate and responsible. However, the housing needs of those in this province who are disadvantaged have been ignored for far too long. The difficulties that people encounter when simply trying to find a home for their family that is both safe and also provides them with a dignified accommodation have been unacceptable.

So it is certainly incumbent upon all of us in this House, as elected representatives of the people in the province of Ontario, to ensure that we take the steps that are necessary to provide all people with the means to access affordable housing. Certainly, in my community, I meet with many groups who impress upon me the fact that there is not appropriate affordable housing available. And we know that appropriate affordable housing is one of the determinants of good health, so it needs to be a priority for all governments and all parties.

We, as a caucus, are going to be supporting this bill, but having said this, I think our critic yesterday pointed out that there is still certainly disappointment with many aspects of the bill. I understand there were about 100 amendments to the bill, but there was only 24 hours for the three parties and our critic, in particular, to review the 100 amendments. Again, we had a case of this Liberal government trying to rush through the bill, as has been happening a lot recently.

I certainly know from my own experience as a member that you cannot do justice to 100 amendments—even just to read them—in a 24-hour period. To review the context in which they were presented to this House, it's simply impossible to do justice and to look at how that amendment is going to impact individuals in this province or organizations, or to look at the merits of the amendment. So this was an enormous amount of work which simply wasn't possible for any of the three parties

to do. I guess maybe it was a little easier for the government; they have additional staff. But certainly, for the opposition it just wasn't possible to do justice, and it's unacceptable.

I don't know why we go through the—almost a farce of having committee hearings and inviting people to come in. Having been on the other side of one of those presentations when I was chair of a school board in Kitchener-Waterloo and Cambridge, I can remember the tremendous effort that we took to make sure that we made a presentation that contained all of the concerns that we had and how we constructed recommendations for amendments. When I think of the work that people put into this behind the scenes before they get here, and then they come in and we have 100 amendments from different groups and organizations and individuals, and then we only have 24 hours—I mean, that's one day. It's just not possible, and we don't do it justice.

I think that in the future, we need to seriously consider this farce that we're perpetrating: pretending we're going to allow people input into legislation and then not providing all of the members in this House with a decent period of time, as I say, to review the amendments, determine the merits of the amendments and also decide whether or not they can support them. So I think that is something that we're seeing far too often and, as I say, it doesn't do justice to the amount of work that the deputies have put into preparing the amendments.

Having said that, I would go back to say that we have been looking for this bill for a long time in this Legislature. It has been promised, and certainly we did support the government's initiatives to consult with Ontarians. I think it is important that we go out and we listen first-hand to the people throughout this great province about the concerns and the hardships that they are facing, and also to learn from them what is broken in the housing system.

0910

I come back to the fact that I think we haven't done justice to the representations that were made. The consultations were almost for naught, because we don't see a lot reflected in this bill, as we now are at the third reading stage. Despite the fact that the government did say they wanted to get it right, I would say to you that what we're seeing here doesn't necessarily represent all the good input we did receive from our people throughout the province of Ontario.

One of the concerns our critic raised was that many of the amendments were submitted by the municipalities. Now, as you know, the municipalities are a very important partner with the provincial government when it comes to affordable housing. Unfortunately the amendments—and there were many that were submitted by the municipalities—were voted against by the government. My colleague the member for Burlington, our critic, said yesterday, "It would behoove the government to ensure respectful partnerships with municipalities." She went on to indicate that, unfortunately, the rejection of the amendments indicated that municipalities, a key partner, were not respected as they should have been in the process.

In many respects this bill leaves our municipalities to do the heavy lifting without getting any real help or assistance from the provincial government. As you know, the municipalities asked for more time to devise their 10-year housing plan, which seems very reasonable. In fact, my colleague the member for Burlington did introduce an amendment that would have provided this, but the government refused, instead mandating that the 10-year plans be developed by municipal service managers and submitted to the ministry by January 2012.

According to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, "We think the government should consider a phased approach. Some municipalities have the planning capacity that can get under way and meet the bill's timeline. Others will need to build or find that capacity, which will take a bit of time." They go on to say, "Municipalities want to get this right. We are accountable to our taxpayers and the residents of affordable housing in our communities. Appropriate time is needed to transition" to what is going to be a "new way of doing business."

The other concern, of course, is that the burden on the municipalities has now been exacerbated by the government's refusal to provide them with a clear picture of what the funding for the plan will be. Again I quote: "The government must understand that municipal councils cannot plan or budget in the absence of knowing what envelope they have to spend from these consolidated programs."

You know, we see this often with this government. They make decisions, but there's no indication of the amount of money that is going to be available. We saw that, for example, when they rolled out plans for full-day kindergarten, but we don't see anything in the budget related to the amount that's going to be necessary for capital construction. They need to be transparent and honest with the public, and in this case, they need to be honest with municipalities, who are finding it difficult to plan or budget in the absence of knowing what kind of envelope is going to be available.

This bill now downloads enormous amounts of responsibility on to our municipal service managers. It tasks them with developing and implementing their own affordable housing plans. AMO has made it clear as to what they need. They were very clear throughout the consultation process, as you know, yet the government has really not seriously considered all the concerns and issues they brought to the table which they felt deserved an answer. They don't have it.

So here we are. We waited seven years for a plan. For seven years, the anticipation in the province has grown as people have patiently waited for the government to fulfill its promises and live up to its responsibilities, but we now have a bill coming forward for third reading that is a disappointment to many of the people in our communities who feel they've been let down.

This bill is a half measure. It is, one could say, a band-aid solution put forward by this Liberal government. It's really quite disappointing to think that it took seven years to get this far, and this is all it is accomplishing.

Although the bill does make minor revisions to the way municipal service managers can spend provincial funding and amends the Planning Act to allow for secondary units, it really doesn't do much of anything else. It doesn't, most importantly, address the many systemic problems that serve, as all of us know, as significant obstacles to affordable housing.

The bill is a number of things, but people were looking for a thorough, complete strategy to address affordable housing issues, and this bill does not provide that complete, thorough strategy. In that respect, it was disappointing.

Perhaps what was also most worrying to people about this bill is its complete lack of ambition. Now, you might ask, what does that mean? Well, if you take a look at it, it doesn't contain any clear goals or objectives. There is nothing special in it and nothing that is going to effect real change. If we're going to correct Ontario's affordable housing situation, we're going to require some creative thinking and innovative solutions. This bill doesn't offer any of that.

There were 485 housing stakeholders, by the way, who were consulted for over six months on this bill. They offered thousands of submissions, but all of them asked for only four distinct actions: new units, new money, rent supplements and inclusionary zoning provisions. Remember that these people are the front-line workers. They know this issue better than any of us in this House, they are the experts who work in this field every day and they are the ones who have a full and complete understanding of the challenges and difficulties. Do you know that those four things were asked for, but the government gave them nothing in the way of new units, new money, rent supplements or inclusionary zoning provisions?

So, we are left with a bill that is a disappointment. It does absolutely nothing to end generational housing issues that have been with us for a long time and which this government had an opportunity to address.

I'd like to touch upon the need for a youth-specific program, because this is an issue I have heard a lot about in my own community. I know it's an issue that was very important to our critic, the member for Burlington. I know that she is very disappointed, as am I, that the government chose to ignore her repeated requests to include provisions related specifically to providing housing for youth. For some reason, the government chose to refuse amendments related to providing housing for crown wards. They did this in spite of the fact that the committee heard many depositions from stakeholders identifying this as a primary concern. Yet, this government chose not to act in response to those very legitimate concerns.

0920

I would say to you that we are baffled as to why this government chose not to protect homeless youth and youth in need of better housing. We all know that a lack of housing for youth puts them at a very severe disadvantage in life. Providing affordable housing for youth in need and at risk is a very necessary, important investment. These young people already face tremendous bar-

riers. Sometimes they come from families which are dysfunctional and they have absolutely no parental support. Surely, the least we can do is to ensure that they have a decent roof over their head.

Another aspect of the bill I'd like to touch on is the McGuinty government's persistent excuse that it is the federal government that is to blame for Ontario's dismal record on housing. Stand up, folks. Take some responsibility. This government's reliance on federal dollars to fund a housing strategy must stop. The federal government has made it clear: They're not in the housing business. We, in the province, are. It's time for us to ensure that our residents in the province of Ontario have access to affordable housing. We need to deliberately make sure that we devise strategies and plans that can address these needs. So I would say, stop the blame game. We need to make sure that we don't abdicate our responsibilities to our people in this province.

As we know, the 2011 provincial budget made no funding commitments to housing. Instead, it talks about the need that the federal government remain a partner: What an abdication of responsibility. It isn't good enough. Ontarians deserve much more from this government. You need to stand up and you need to act.

Finally, I'd like to speak to the government's constant reliance on regulations. Regulations are created by bureaucrats, far from the front lines and without any ability for the public and municipalities to offer any insight, experiences or input. Specifics ought to be included directly in the bill where the public can have some input; now, they can't.

Having said all this, we are still going to support this bill because at least it moves forward in a minor way. We will support it. But as I've pointed out, we are disappointed in the bill's scope. We are disappointed in the fact that the input from the stakeholders throughout the province of Ontario has been largely ignored. We are concerned about its overly prescriptive nature. We are concerned about its lack of a housing benefit. We are concerned about its lack of youth housing, which is a real deficiency as far as we are concerned. And of course, as I pointed out, we are very concerned about its overall lack of ambition. It contains no clear goals and no clear objectives.

As a government, we should all be held accountable for providing affordable housing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm going to be doing my lead soon, but suffice it to say, here is a housing bill with not one new unit of housing, not one new dollar for housing and, in fact, a 10% reduction in housing, which makes Ontario the worst in Canada for investing in per capita housing—the very worst. Worse than Alberta, worse than everywhere. And not one new rent supplement. There's nothing of housing in the housing bill.

Not only that, but this puts the McGuinty government in breach of United Nations laws. We have a letter from the rapporteur's representative here, who says that unless

the amendments that were put forward, that were asked for by the housing advocates who came and made their submissions, were made—they were “critical to ensuring compliance with Ontario’s obligations under international human rights law to fully ensure the right to adequate housing.”

You can’t get worse than that. It’s not us; it’s not the New Democratic Party. It’s the United Nations who’s calling the McGuinty government out and saying they are in non-compliance with international human rights law. That’s number one.

Number two, please remember this: the worst government in Canada—it has nothing to do with the federal government; it has to do with the McGuinty government—in terms of investment per capita in affordable housing.

This bill satisfies no one, absolutely no one. It’s a slap in the faces of over 450 housing groups that made submissions to the representatives here. It’s a disgrace. There are two small little iota items that make it impossible not to vote for it, but this is not a housing bill. As I say, it’s an insult to all of those who’ve been fighting for affordable housing across this province and around the world.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Dave Levac: I need about 60 minutes to rebut some of the things that the honourable member has been talking about. I respect the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, and she knows I do, but when she puts her partisan hat on I think we need to find the other side of the story. So let’s hear it.

The process had the amendments on the table, same as everyone else. The NDP, to their credit, gave us 49 amendments. You know how many you guys gave us? Five. And you’ve got twice the staff. So let me tell you, over the seven years of your party, how many questions did you guys ask on affordable housing? Seven. Seven questions—no, sorry. Correct the record: four. Four questions.

When you were in power, you cancelled 17,000 units. Your leader Mr. Harris said he wanted to get out of the affordable housing business. Oh, my gosh. The rooster is crowing here.

And what did the critic say? The critic said that she wanted to have a respectful partnership for municipalities. Let me read her quotes from when she was the regional chair. I can’t say this one word, Speaker, because it’s unparliamentary, but it’s not quite telling the truth to the public. “I don’t know what rationale the province is using.” “We’ve endured a huge loss of revenue in spite of the fact...” “We’ll come out of this okay...” “Without this confirmation, the question of whether the province’s promises have been”—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Dave Levac: Could I have the clock stopped?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): No.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: No, you can’t.

There’s a point in our standing orders that says you can’t say indirectly what you can’t say directly, and I

think this man said something along the lines that couldn’t—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. I would agree that the honourable member perhaps came close to saying something unparliamentary, but I’ll allow the honourable member to carry on, please.

Mr. Dave Levac: Nice trick. You just don’t like to hear what you guys did. You didn’t have history before 2003. I’d like the member to stand up and tell us about their record on affordable housing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: As our member from Kitchener–Waterloo pointed out, this bill could be summarized in perhaps one word: timid. Very, very timid.

You can put a lot of adjectives in front of that “timid,” because this bill, as pointed out by the member from—

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Kitchener–Waterloo.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: —Kitchener–Waterloo, just doesn’t do very much. Two little tiny points that you could vote for, but other than that this bill falls far, far short.

After seven years of preparation, it’s a little embarrassing that you’ve struggled mightily and brought forth this excuse for a bill. It’s unfortunate that the government didn’t have a little more chutzpah to bring forth something that is perhaps needed in this province as much as any other issue in this province’s needs. As was pointed out earlier, we are standing last in Canada.

Of course, that’s becoming a place where Ontario is getting used to standing. We’re the lowest producer of new jobs; we’re the lowest producer of recovery items. We stand lowest in economic activity in many different areas. It is a shame that this government, after eight years, has brought Ontario to this very sad position.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?
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Mr. Howard Hampton: I think that anyone who works at the municipal level virtually anywhere across the province will tell you that we have a real crisis in affordable housing. We have a real crisis in affordable housing for seniors. We have a real crisis in affordable housing for people who struggle on low and modest incomes. We have a real crisis in affordable housing for people who need assisted living or supportive housing and simply do not have the income.

The travesty of this bill is that for over seven years this government has talked a good game about affordable housing, this government has talked a good game about social housing, it has talked a good game on all of these fronts, and it has continued to say, “Oh, wait. We’re studying it. We’re looking at it. We’re surveying it. We’re detailing it. Just wait; we’re really going to do something. We’re really going to address this problem.” And then out comes this bill.

What does this bill do? Just about nothing—just about nothing. After all of the rhetoric, after all of the happy talk, after all of the “Oh, we’re going to study it. We’re

going to detail it. We're going to address it," what does this bill do? Just about nothing.

You talk about a game of flim-flam perpetrated on some of the most vulnerable people in Ontario—this is it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Kitchener–Waterloo has two minutes for her response.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Thank you very much for the contributions by the members for Parkdale–High Park, Brant, Halton and Kenora–Rainy River.

I just would like to say that affordable housing is an issue that this government has talked about since they were elected in 2003. They have made promises and commitments to the people throughout the province of Ontario, and I know that, because I've had so many people make visits to my constituency office in Kitchener–Waterloo who were hanging on to hope—hope that the government actually would address the issues and provide some additional housing for the 142,000 people who were looking for accommodation. Regrettably, these 142,000 people are still going to continue to wait. They are left hoping and waiting for more housing.

You know what? This government, despite the fact that they were making so many promises, didn't respond to the front-line people, the people who know what's going on every day; the people who asked for new units, new money, rent supplements and inclusionary zoning provisions. They totally neglected the advice and the input from those individuals, and those individuals, more than anybody else, are the people that they should have listened to. They're the people in my community who know what is needed, because they interact every day with those in need. They understand the challenges and the difficulty that the people without proper housing are affected by.

Of course, personally, it's the youth housing—no addressing the issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's certainly an honour to stand on behalf of my constituents and all of those who have been fighting for affordable housing for as long as I can remember in the province of Ontario.

I could start off, as I did in my two-minute hit, by saying that this is a government in breach of the United Nations human rights law, according to their rapporteur—that they personally intervened, that they had an observer here for the amendments and the discussion because of how bad things are in Ontario.

I could start off by talking about how this so-called housing bill doesn't have one new dollar, one new unit, one new rent supplement, any changes to the Planning Act to allow municipalities to bring in things like inclusionary zoning—none of that.

Instead, I'm going to work around to that. What I'd like to start off by doing is telling a story. It's a story of a young teenage girl who used to sleep in the park just to the north of this House, a young girl who left home, like many teenagers do, not necessarily for economic reasons

or because they've been orphaned, but because of violence in the home, because their home situation became unbearable and, in fact, the streets were somewhat safer than their home situation. We find this story over and over again amongst homeless youth, and this was certainly the case for this young girl. She slept in the park because she'd run out of couches to surf; she'd run out of families to stay with. Of course, she didn't sleep very soundly, because if you're a teenage girl sleeping in a public park, you don't sleep very soundly.

Times were different back then—this was a while back. She made her way to her family doctor, who filled out a form and managed to get her on student welfare. Student welfare, back in the day, was enough to live on, pay your rent and go to school with, and that's what she did. Student welfare allowed her to rent a basement apartment. It was enough to send her back to high school, and from high school she redirected her life and went on to university.

That's not the case anymore. Now, welfare for a single person is just over \$500 a month. You're going to hear me speak about the plight of our youth, particularly crown wards, who are released on to the streets at the age of 18 with nowhere to go, and who fight, along with the other 142,000 families waiting 10 to 12 years, for affordable housing in this province. So you can't do that anymore. You can't do that. I'm hearkening back not to some halcyon days, according to social progressives in Ontario; I'm hearkening back to the days when this province was blue generation in, almost generation out. The girl that I'm speaking about was me. I tell the story often, because it's not very far, in terms of physical distance, from that park on the north side of this building to this green leather seat in this chamber.

I'm glad I was alive and born when I was, because who knows how that story would have ended now, if that same girl had slept in the park in this generation? I can tell you the story, because we heard it from many of the submitters to the housing panel that was called to look at Bill 140. We heard from many of them, particularly from the provincial advocates for youth and children, who said that now, the vast majority of girls in the situation I was in back then are doomed to a far, far different fate than one day being elected to be a member of provincial Parliament, and all the background that one needs to get oneself here.

That's what we're talking about here; we're talking about lives. We're talking about lives resurrected—a good word to remember in this month of Easter—and lives that are defeated, and the single greatest difference is a safe place to live. That's why the United Nations takes such interest in affordable housing, not only here but around the world. That's why the United Nations took part in a provincial housing consultation. That's why the United Nations ruled this government—and will be sending a letter shortly to that effect—to be in breach of international human rights law. That's why. We have the worst record in Canada for housing. It's not about the feds for this issue. It's not about the feds. It's about what

we do here. We can't pass the buck. In this province, we actually spent less than half of the national average per capita. You know, in Saskatchewan they spent four times as much per person as they did in Ontario. This is McGuinty's actual record on housing.

I'm going to tell you that in 2003, when people elected this government, they elected them in part on a promise to build 20,000 new units. You know, eight years later, they've still only funded 15,000—eight years later—and built only half that number, barely 11,000 new units. In fact, they've built only, and provided only, about one fifth of what every housing advocate across the province has called for. And now that federal funding is probably going to be reduced, we don't have any plan in place to replace it—none.

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In fact, not only do we not have a plan in place—because this isn't a plan, Bill 140; this is an excuse made instead of a plan—but we are facilitating the privatization of Toronto Community Housing stock. The very few units that we have, this government is walking in lock-step with Rob Ford and the city of Toronto and other mayors who want to privatize, to facilitate the privatization of existing affordable housing stock.

What we have is an upcoming disaster, as if we don't already live in one. Remember the national disaster? We still live in that. We have the highest housing costs in Canada. Against the backdrop of inaction, we also have the worst possible situation. Do you know that over 50% of our renters pay over 50% of their income on rent? Where is that going to lead to?

Let's hearken back to that young girl in the park. Let's hearken back to her days, when she grew up in the province of Ontario. In those days—I know there are some here watching who are at least my age, if not a few years older—on one salary, you could afford to buy a house and a car and, if you were one of the lucky few, a cottage as well. Now let's compare that reality to our children's reality, and you know I'm speaking the truth, those who are listening and watching at home. On two salaries you're lucky, in the city of Toronto, to be able to afford—not a house—maybe a condo, and maybe make payments on a car. Only the very wealthy can afford a second home. That's the reality. That's how far we've actually fallen in terms of home ownership over two generations.

In fact, for the first time, all of those immigrants who came here to see their children do better than they do will watch their children do worse than they do. In fact, we're beginning to see a kind of reverse migration, partly because of housing. I'm not the only mother of a son who went to China to teach English. Often our children are going to other countries now to get jobs because they can't find them here. That's the backdrop of this. It's grim.

Again, don't buy my word for it; buy the word of the 450-plus groups that work in the housing field that sent their representatives here, almost all of whom called for a few basic items to be in this bill.

What's one of those basic items? First of all, that you have targets and timelines. How can you have a housing bill, how can you have any kind of bill that talks for action in any area, without targets and timelines? "We will have so many units. We will have so many rent supplements." Targets—none. Timelines—none. This isn't, I would argue, a housing bill; this is an excuse for one.

Interjections.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: To my friends opposite who are saying, "Well then, don't vote for it," this is a classic McGuinty Liberal ploy, quite frankly.

This is what you do: You name a bill. You could just have one page. You don't need the rest of the bill; just say, "We like affordable housing." There's a bill: "We like affordable housing. Vote for it or against it." And guess what's going to happen? You vote against it, and on their campaign literature it will say, "The Progressive Conservatives and the New Democrats don't like affordable housing." Come on.

Do you really think you can live in that? Do you think the 142,000 families can live in a bill that says, "We like affordable housing"? Maybe if you got all the bills that this government has put together in the last eight years, you could actually build one unit, because there's a lot of paper that flies around this place, but you can't live in that. You can't live in it. That wouldn't provide housing for that girl in the park. It wouldn't provide housing for anybody. This bill will not provide housing for anyone. That's the simple reality of this bill.

Let's go through what some of those who made presentations had to say. You are going to hear, Mr. Speaker and those listening at home, a litany of every advocate who works with the impoverished and the marginalized. You will hear from every organization who puts some hope in the 25-in-5 so-called plan. Again, that was a bill that said, "We don't like poverty." That was that bill, and you can't feed yourself on that.

So now, as we're on our way to increasing the level of child poverty 25% in five years, we have these who came to submit on this so-called housing bill. We had Campaign 2000. Everybody knows Campaign 2000. I certainly know Jacquie Maund. She lives in my riding. She's an incredible woman who has worked really hard, as has her organization. What were the demands they made? Five, and you will hear these five demands made over and over and over again.

First of all, prevent the privatization and the sell-off of social housing. As our committee was meeting, 47 properties of affordable housing were on the chopping block in the city of Toronto. And by the way, if you think that this has to do with the recession, let me point out that there have been other recessions. This isn't the first, and it probably will not be the last. Yet this is the worst performance of any provincial government in Canada: half of the investment per capita of the average; a quarter of what Saskatchewan put into per capita affordable housing.

But let's compare us with, let's say, a progressive administration; for example, the country of Sweden, nine

million people. We have 13 million in Ontario. In Sweden, they had what they called a "million-home plan." For every year, they built—built—100,000 new units. That's where they preferred to put their stimulus money: into building homes. Guess what? Building homes produces jobs right across the sector. It stimulated their economy during a recession. That's when they started building.

What has this government done in response to recession? They've given billions to corporations, which no lesser authority than StatsCan has shown is the worst possible way to produce jobs, the worst possible way to stimulate an economy. In fact, StatsCan shows that—where does that money end up? You give tax breaks to corporations—and by the way, we should be ashamed of this—and we now have the lowest corporate tax rate in North America and one of the worst homelessness issues. Hey, maybe the two are related.

That's the worst possible way of producing jobs, and in fact, it does not stimulate the economy. StatsCan has shown that. What has happened is that these companies simply invest the money again. They basically put the money in their pocket. Cash reserves have gone through the roof. Banks and insurance companies are making huge profits, and more and more people are waiting on housing lists.

So, prevent the privatization and the sell-off of social housing, says Campaign 2000.

Two: Restrict punitive rent-geared-to-income rules. Remember Al Gosling? Remember the death of that poor old man? This bill is not going to prevent any more deaths like Al Gosling's. In fact, there'll be fewer units, so you can bet, with the privatization that's under way in cities like Toronto, there will be more death—no doubt.

Three: Improve fairness for tenants. Well, boy, nothing much in this bill for tenants, I'll tell you. Second units—you know, what we used to call "granny flats." That's in here. That is a minor, minor step forward when we need a major step forward.

I was out travelling with Mary Wiens, the CBC host in my riding, looking at some of the privately held so-called affordable housing stock. I can tell you we went into one apartment where a lady was celebrating I think it was her 92nd birthday. She had been living in the apartment for 30 years, and for 15 of those 30 years she had complained of a leaky roof. She lived on the top floor of an eight-storey building. The roof was leaking, and she was putting a bucket there—a 90-year-old woman—to collect the water.

Well, what did her landlord do? We took pictures, because Mary Wiens couldn't believe it. They built an indoor eavestrough. They didn't repair the roof; they built an eavestrough, indoors, going into a bucket. That was their answer, and she has lived that way for 15 years.

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What do we need to protect tenants? Well, I can tell you we need some legislation—we in the New Democratic Party put forward landlord licensing—where landlords like that would have to comply with building codes.

There's nothing like that now. Bad landlords ignore building codes; I see it all the time.

If any member here would like to go and visit this lady, I'm happy to accommodate. You will see that this particular landlord has been doing this for 15 years—and still collecting rent, I must say. And, by the way, their capital investment, the building, has gone up hugely in value in that 15 years. Unlike most small business that invests in capital and the capital goes down, housing tends not to in the province of Ontario. So there we have it.

By the way, finally, introduce inclusionary housing. Inclusionary housing, if we recall, was my bill. I put it before this House. Everybody voted for it. It was passed. And guess what? There it died. I hoped that the very least that would come out in Bill 140 would be an amendment to the Planning Act; that's all that our bill called for. It didn't even ask municipalities to bring in inclusionary zoning. It wasn't prescriptive; it simply allowed them the possibility of bringing in inclusionary zoning, if they so chose. Hazel McCallion liked it. People liked it.

Across the province of Ontario, municipalities would like more control over their housing stock. Whether it's density bonusing or inclusionary zoning, they know that right now, under the rules in Ontario, a developer could appeal that, go to the OMB and get it thrown out. That's why we don't have inclusionary zoning in Ontario. It's all through the States, it's in Vancouver, but it's not here.

What is inclusionary zoning? It doesn't cost a tax dime; all it is is allowing the municipalities to say, "From now on"—here's an example of inclusionary zoning legislation—"every development over 50 units needs to set aside 10% to be affordable." Do you know that, at that most conservative number, we calculated that if the city of Toronto and all municipalities had inclusionary zoning laws in place at the 10% rate, we would have 13,000 new units of affordable housing every single year?

Now, that isn't the whole solution, but it goes a long way to those 142,000 families waiting. It certainly would speed up the process, and it's good for developers and tenants alike. Why? Because in the down market, it allows developers to unload their less-desirable units or, if the city allows them to build another floor, it doesn't cost them anything and we get affordable housing out of it, and it doesn't cost us anything.

This is such a simple step, and even this step this government was unwilling to take. You ask for a mile, you get—I'm used to pushing the elephant uphill in this place, but here, my goodness, most of the housing advocates settled for asking for maybe a few yards, and instead they got a centimetre—a centimetre—in this bill.

Let's move on; let's hear from some of the others who made submissions. This is kind of a classic. From ACTO, we got email after email stating again and again the five key demands that you just heard me outline:

"(1) Prevent the privatization and sell-off of social housing." That's not asking a lot. That's not asking for the 10,000 new builds that some of them ask for; that's just saying "let's not get rid of what we have."

“(2) Restrict punitive rent-geared-to-income rules.” Again, let’s prevent some deaths here; that’s not happening here.

“(3) Improve fairness for tenants.” Nothing in the bill for that.

“(4) Introduce inclusionary” zoning or “housing.” Didn’t happen—or, as I said, all my bill would do is allow municipalities to have that option. It’s not even prescriptive. They wouldn’t even do that.

“(5) Social housing providers need a fair appeals process.” With the disaster that has become not-for-profit housing and the response from the Ford government to it, that’s the least one could ask for. That’s not what Ontarians got.

The Wellesley Institute, which is perhaps the foremost authority on housing, again reiterates, as did everyone, what they asked for.

Recommendation 1: Amend the Planning Act to ensure municipalities have the power “to enact locally appropriate inclusionary housing plans.” For a government that’s frightened of spending a dime, inclusionary zoning, inclusionary housing or allowing municipalities the ability to do that is a no-tax, no-cost alternative. No, couldn’t do that in this bill.

Recommendation 2: Amend Bill 140 to require the provincial government to create a comprehensive, made-in-Ontario affordable housing plan. In other words, what the Wellesley Institute and what they all asked for, quite frankly, and were all ignored on, was, let’s have a housing plan. After all those thousands of hours of deputations—by the way, I should correct myself on that; according to the member from Welland, it’s not “deputations”—the thousands of hours of submissions that were made by housing groups, a plan was one of the first priorities. A housing bill, you would think, would have a plan for housing in it. No, didn’t get it; they said no to that and no to all the amendments. As you heard, some 49 amendments were voted down.

Housing as a human right: Again, I come back to the United Nations and the fact that this government is in breach of international human rights law and has caught the eye of the United Nations special rapporteur, who actually is going to be writing a letter to this government, actually had a representative here claiming—not claiming; pointing out quite clearly—that without these amendments, this government is in breach of international human rights law.

One would think that would be a shameful thing. One would think that a government would be ashamed to have caught the eye of the United Nations. A provincial government, my goodness: The United Nations have lots of other things on their plate other than focusing in on the government of Ontario and housing, but they did. They did, because it’s so egregious. That should be shameful.

Again, these are very simple demands. Targets and timelines—any plan. I don’t care in what field, in what endeavour: Targets and timelines are necessary.

Oh, here we have the submission from the Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario. You already know what

they’re going to ask for, don’t you, Mr. Speaker? You already know because it’s the same thing that every other group asked for.

Here we have health care professionals asking for the same things:

“(1) Immediately enshrine the human right to adequate housing in federal and provincial legislation.” Do you know why this government is not going to do that? Do you know why it will not pass such a law, even though it doesn’t cost a dime? It’s that they know that the next thing—I mean, they’re already going to get class action lawsuits; there’s no doubt about that—people will do, those 142,000 families who are waiting, is say, “Hey, it’s my United Nations-given right to housing. Where is it?” And this government is going to say, “Sorry, too bad. We don’t have it, and we’re not planning on providing it.”

Interjections.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Don’t argue with me. The members across are—the member from London—Fanshawe should be very concerned about affordable housing in his riding, by the way. He’s arguing with the nurses’ association of Ontario and their recommendations. I would say, take it up with Doris, give her a call, because these are their recommendations—not hers; the entire nursing organization.

You remember that each of these folks who came to submit represents hundreds, if not thousands, of members. Do you know how many people were actually sitting at that table making these amendments? Thousands and thousands of Ontarians, all saying the same things, all being repulsed by this government.

“(2) Immediately implement the recommendation of the Ontario Human Rights Commission to address discrimination in rental housing,” said the RAO. There’s none of that. In fact, we had two submitters, who I’ll raise right now, who particularly moved me. One was a provincial advocate for youth who talked about the plight of crown wards. Crown wards are literally sent from their foster homes at the age of 18. Where are they? The door is opened, they are sent out. Where do they go? On to the affordable housing waiting list. There is no priority given to an 18-year-old. That girl in the park wouldn’t have had any priority under this government. She would have waited 10 to 12 years—that’s the average—for an affordable housing unit. An 18-year-old needs schooling, needs direction, needs supervision; they’re out of luck. So the provincial advocate didn’t get what they wanted for crown wards.

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At the other end of life, seniors’ groups came here and made their submissions—seniors’ groups. Can you imagine being a senior and living in poverty—and many of them are—using food banks? Imagine being told to wait 10 to 12 years for affordable housing. Give me a break. They don’t have 10 to 12 years. So an African seniors’ organization came—it was very moving—and said to the committee, “Our members don’t have 10 to 12 years left, and they need affordable housing yesterday.”

Where are we giving seniors affordable housing now? I was just at a hospital to visit a friend of mine, and, boy,

I saw a number of seniors there, waiting in beds in hospital wards, waiting to be transferred somewhere. How much does it cost? This is absurd.

Talking about the costs, by the way, before I go into all the other RNAO recommendations, do you know that it costs more to keep somebody homeless than to house them? This is the worst kind of false economy. My goodness, Americans have done studies. In New York City, it costs about \$55,000 a year to keep someone homeless. Why? They visit emergency wards; they take up beds in hospital; they take up beds in jails; they interact with the justice system; they use shelters, which are expensive housing. Shelters are expensive housing. This is the ridiculous move of this government: paying more money to keep people homeless. In fact, Mr. Gerretsen, when he was the housing minister, admitted as much—it's in Hansard—because when he came forward to government agencies and we brought forward this statistic, he said, "I know." It costs more to keep somebody homeless. It's ridiculous. They know this is the case. In Vancouver, it was \$45,000 a year in the study there to keep somebody homeless. This is absurd, but this is this government's plan of attack.

"(3) Introduce"—of course—"inclusionary housing by amending the Planning Act...." Guess what? Yet again, inclusionary housing.

"(4) Introduce and fund in the upcoming budget a universal housing benefit for all low-income Ontarians...." It's on the order paper; I put it there. That's what was asked for. That's been asked for by every housing advocate. Just think: If you're on Ontario disabilities and you're earning around \$1,000 a month—and remember, the reason you're on Ontario disabilities is because you cannot work. You cannot work. You have a disability. You get only about \$1,000 a month. Imagine trying to live in the city of Toronto on that and paying rent. I would challenge any of my Liberal friends across the aisle to try to live in the province of Ontario, while disabled, on \$1,000 a month and pay market rent. Good luck. So Daily Bread and every anti-poverty activist across the province has called for a housing benefit. Is there a housing benefit? Absolutely not. There is no housing benefit. So, to Daily Bread and to all those anti-poverty activists across Ontario, this government has said, "No." It said no to you. Eight years later—it's had eight years—they've said no. So you know that this government is not the friend of the anti-poverty activists and it's not the friend of the housing activists.

Again, with the nurses' recommendations: "Invest, in the upcoming budget, in a minimum of 10,000 affordable housing units each and every year for the next 10 years. To ensure that housing is accessible"—I'm lucky in my riding. We have some supportive housing that went in. Boy, it took about 10 years to get it—Edmond Yu housing. Here's a shout-out to all of the incredible social workers and others—to Victor Willis and all the people at PARC—who finally got some units of affordable housing done.

It took about 10 years. That's how much time it usually takes. Don't tell me that can't be streamlined. Don't

tell me there isn't a better way of providing affordable housing in burnt-out buildings, in appropriated buildings, on provincial land that's sitting idle. It shouldn't take 10 years, but it did.

A minimum of 10,000 affordable units: You've heard me say that it's a great way of jump-starting the economy too, for all the building trades and for everybody else. Put money into infrastructure development. Put it into housing. It will create jobs.

My example of the Swedish government, with their 100,000 units a year, which they did build: There is virtually no homelessness in Sweden. Guess what? Their economy is doing better than ours. Guess what? That's the land of IKEA, Sony Ericsson. It's the land of Volvo. It's the land of all of these multinational companies. They're not hurting; they're doing okay, and their people are housed. Guess what? It's free to go to university there too. Why? Because they didn't choose to put billions into corporate tax giveaways. They preferred to put the billions into infrastructure development, because they know it creates jobs.

Hey, this is history. This is New Deal stuff. This isn't new. StatsCan just said what every other economist or historian will tell you: that giving money away to corporations, the trickle-down economic theory, doesn't trickle down. It doesn't work. But putting money in at the bottom and hoping it generates jobs like housing works time and time again.

"Fund in the upcoming budget a program for regular maintenance and repair of new and existing affordable housing." Not only was this not there—remember, not one new dollar—but in fact what's going to happen because of this bill is that you're going to see increasing privatization. As I said, 47 properties are now on the auction block—affordable housing. These are units we will never get back; once they go private, we're never going to see them again. That's it. That's happening as we speak, and this bill does nothing to stop that. In fact, this bill paves the way for more of it.

Another example of an ask here: "Introduce a fair, transparent and independent appeals process for housing providers. Under the existing legislation, non-profit organizations and co-ops have not had the ability to seek an independent review" of municipal service managers' actions. Again, an ask here with, you know, a kind of measly reply in Bill 140. But truly, service managers and municipalities have far more of a say than they should about existing housing stock. That has also come across in a great many recommendations.

The Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation: It becomes redundant, but they asked for something for rights of persons with disabilities; so did the UN, by the way. There's nothing here, no housing credit for those on disability and no recognition that those on disability might actually need housing, particular kinds of housing, so good luck to them. I really wish good luck to them.

It's frightening that the use of food banks has gone up. For all the crowing that the McGuinty Liberals do about the Harris-Eves government, the actual reality is that

there are more poor people now than there were then. There are more homeless now than there were then. There are more on the housing lists now than there were then, under so-called Liberal rule—majority Liberal rule. That's the reality.

That girl who slept in a park—that was under a Tory government. Saskatchewan and Alberta are doing better than we are. For all the fearmongering that happens from across the aisle, one would have to ask, where's the actual policy? Where is a step to making anything better? It's not here. It's not in Bill 140.

Where else? Ontario health centres: Again, we know that safe, affordable housing is a key determinant of health. That is why health professionals, including the RNAO, stepped forward, made their submissions, called on the government to act, and sadly, the government did not act. It said no. It did act, really, I should say: It said no. It said, "No, we don't care what you say." The Association of Ontario Health Centres: What have they asked for? Let's see. Any surprises here? No. Hey, annual funding to build 10,000 affordable homes per year and ongoing maintenance; prevent the privatization and sell-off of social housing; restrict punitive rent-geared-to-income rules, the ones that resulted in the death of Al Gosling; improve fairness for tenants; introduce inclusionary housing. Again, the same five asks over and over and over again.

Golden Horseshoe Co-operative Housing Federation: same asks.

Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario and Housing Network of Ontario, representing thousands and thousands of people across the province: What do you think they asked for? Inclusionary housing, improved fairness for tenants, restrict punitive rent-geared-to-income, prevent the privatization and sell-off.

You know, again, the government's answer to all those thousands of tenants across Ontario: The answer is no. The answer is, "No, we do not accept your demands. We won't do what you ask."

Here is an interesting paragraph. This particularly sad submission is from the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth for Ontario—because there were youth there. As I described that girl sleeping in the park, well, guess what? We have youth sleeping in our parks now, a lot more of them, a whole lot more of them; in fact, thousands more of them than in my day.

1010

Here's what they wrote in their submission:

"At 18, a youth is no longer considered a child in need of care and the youth is expected to live independently. Typically, youth who are living in foster homes, group homes, and transitional housing program (through CAS) must leave the home they are living in when they turn 18 because the funding agreements that pay the cost of their care are completely withdrawn. Several youth in the care of CAS describe this experience as 'difficult.'" No kidding. What an understatement. Imagine being thrust out on to the street at 18 after having a history of trauma.

"Young people who have experienced this sudden withdrawal of support are adamant that 'no child should

be forced to live on their own until they are ready; no one cares whether we are ready.' For many children and youth leaving care, this is a continuation of a loss of control that began with the circumstances that caused them to enter care."

I only have a few minutes left, and I want to take some of them to tell the story of another youth. After being ordained and being in the United Church, we had a truck in our parking lot that we woke up to one morning, and in the truck were a man and his daughter, and that's where they lived. They said they could not afford to live anywhere else. This little girl went to school every day, and every night she went home to the truck.

We, as church members, stepped up and we helped in any way we could. We tried to find housing. We did not succeed; there wasn't any. One day, we woke up and the truck moved away from the parking lot of the church. We don't know what happened to that little girl and her father, and interestingly enough, not one of her teachers knew what her living circumstances were, either. On the face of it, a normal dad who got up in the morning, put on a suit, went out and looked for work; on the face of it, a perfectly normal little girl, dressed like every other kid, who took a lunch, went to school and came back. They lived in a truck.

How many children right now are living in poverty? Well, I know the answer; it's a rhetorical question: one in six in the province of Ontario. How many of those one in six are actually living in circumstances like that? We don't know, but we know there are many.

This is who we're talking about, because behind the outrageous statistics, behind the startling, galling apathy of this government across the aisle, behind all of the submissions for all of the housing advocates and anti-poverty advocates are these stories. They're the stories of real children and real people. It's my story; it's a story of someone you know or a story of someone they knew. These are real people. You can give them a hand up or you can turn your back on them.

Quite frankly, not just me, but every submitter to this committee was told no and the United Nations was told no. This government, the McGuinty Liberals, has turned their back on them. There's not a way out under Bill 140 and under this administration. In fact, the hole gets deeper. In fact, the crisis is worse and worse every year that this government has been sitting in those seats. The situation grows worse, and that's the reality.

Again, it's not me. It's the United Nations special rapporteur who says this government's in breach.

Interjection.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The member from Brant thinks this is funny. He's laughing. The member from Brant thinks this is funny. I'm outraged. He thinks it's funny that one in six children live in poverty; that homelessness is going up in his riding, too.

Mr. Dave Levac: No, I think you are.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The member from Brant thinks I'm funny. Well, I'll leave that up to the voters at home and to the people who are watching, if they think this is a

funny story. The member from Brant thinks this is a funny story, talking about a little girl who lives in a truck, talking about a kid who slept in a park, talking about the provincial advocate, who talks about the situation of crown wards or seniors, or the special rapporteur from the United Nations, who wrote a letter saying if you do not pass these amendments you will be in breach of international human rights law.

Mr. Dave Levac: Get off the pulpit. You are.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: He can insult me all he wants. I'm used to it; I've taken it. And women do, all the time, especially in this place. That's another issue. But you know, certainly the cat—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Stop the clock, please. Order. I'd just ask the honourable members to settle down, please, and stop the personal insults.

The honourable member for Parkdale-High Park has the floor.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Homeless youth are used to being ignored. We see them on the streets all the time now in the city of Toronto. Certainly, those who are on the waiting list are being ignored, because there's no housing for them.

All that I ask of this government is that they step up to the plate and, for the first time since they've taken office, not be in breach of the United Nations human rights laws. That would be a start. I'll continue.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being 10:15 of the clock, this House stands in recess until 10:30, at which time we will have question period.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I'd like to introduce Rabbi Yermi Cohen and his son Mendy, who are here today.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: It's my privilege today to introduce a constituent, Barbara Dupont, who is here today in the gallery to receive a Victim Services Award. Welcome, Barb.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I am delighted to introduce my guests today. They are the parents of page Grace Conroy: Kathleen Sabyan; her husband, Rick Conroy; and their children John, Ah-mei and Lily. The Conroys also operate the Wellington Times, a wonderful media outlet franchise in Prince Edward County.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: As you know, we have an exceptional number of pages here today. I'm pleased to introduce Sydney's parents: her father, Pat O'Brien, who is in the members' gallery; her mother, Christine; her brother Andrew; her sister Emily; and her brother Tucker. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to introduce students from the journalism course at Centennial College. I have Andrew Phillips, Connie Kennedy, Scott Reid, Nicholas Pescod, Braydon Keddie, Nicole Pulsin-

elli, Sanja Gavranovic, Alisa Randall, Jilan Nasher, Kris Ali-Trotman, Octavian Lacatusu, Kyle Koivisto, Jesse Mirsky, Matilda Miranda, and Melanie Schawill. I hope you enjoy it. That's all I can say.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Today at 12 o'clock, we're giving out the Attorney General's Victim Services Awards of Distinction. A number of the recipients are in the gallery or are getting there. If I could just read out their names: Jim Vince from Chatham; Jacquie Carr; Catherine Kedziora; Barbara Dupont; Timea Nagy; Kim Gibson; Sparky J.; Julie Bechard-Fischer; Yevonne Culligan; the Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention Services of Halton, represented by Jacqueline Benn-John; the Sexual Assault Survivors' Centre of Sarnia-Lambton, represented by Michelle Batty; and the Hearing Healing Hope centre, represented by Steve Irwin. We invite all members to attend the awards.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'd ask all members to help me welcome Sally Smith and Elaine Iannuzziello, who are here today to witness question period.

Mr. Dave Levac: As very special guests of our page Madelaine Brown, what we have is mum and dad here, Carol Lyn Brown and Dan Brown—up in the special space with a friend of mine—and grandmother and grandfather Nancy and Deane Falle, the grandparents of Madelaine. They're here to observe question period and they're excited about it.

Mr. David Caplan: I want to welcome Rabbi Yermi Cohen—he delivered shmurah matzah to members of the Legislature—and his son Mendy, who are here to watch proceedings during Queen's Park. Welcome.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'd like to introduce a man who has spent considerable time travelling through the province, speaking of the word of government largesse and waste. He's a man with vast experience in government and really needs no introduction, since we've all seen him in the local papers: Jim Wilson, the member from Simcoe-Grey.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind the honourable members that this is an opportunity to introduce guests to the Legislature. Introducing a member is not an introduction.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Norm wouldn't do that.

Interjection: He's been away for a while.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): And as honourable members know, we don't make references to the attendance of members as well.

The member from Chatham-Kent-Essex.

Mr. Pat Hoy: From Chatham-Kent, Michelle Schryer. She works with the women's assault crisis centre.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On Thursday, April 7, 2011, the member for Welland, Mr. Kormos, raised a point of order with respect to the practice of referring questions asked of one minister to another. The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, Mr. Yaka-buski, also spoke to this point of order, and I have re-

ceived a written submission from the government House leader, Ms. Smith, which I note was copied to the other two House leaders.

The member for Welland made reference to standing order 37(e), which states, "A minister to whom an oral question is directed may refer the question to another minister who is responsible for the subject matter to which the question relates." The member expressed some concern over the referral of a question on the subject of wood allocations from the Premier to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and the government House leader.

The member will know that the Speaker is not in a position to determine, except in general terms, which particular program or policy falls within the sphere of responsibility for each minister. It's the prerogative of the government to decide which minister should answer which question. The Speaker cannot compel any particular minister to answer a question or, indeed, decide for the executive council who among them is the most appropriate responder. This position has been taken on numerous occasions by successive Speakers, here and in other jurisdictions. It is further substantiated by a variety of procedural authorities.

I thank the member for Welland for bringing these concerns to the attention of the House, but I cannot find that he has raised a valid point of order.

ORAL QUESTIONS

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Did you or any member of your staff direct and advise staff in your ministry to withhold the release of freedom-of-information records that the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus requested on cable television packages in jails?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I can't believe that we would ever contemplate doing any such thing. Freedom-of-information requests are made from various sources, including, in your case, your caucus; the NDP caucus; members of the public; and members of the media. They are processed in the normal manner, without my knowledge that you're asking a specific question. Eventually, the answer comes from the ministry. To my knowledge, that most assuredly would not be the case.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Minister, this is very serious. The Ontario PC caucus submitted a freedom-of-information request on August 19 of last year. By September 27, the ministry had gathered all the records. The first sign something was up came a month later, when the ministry said it had photocopied everything, but some parts of the copies were unreadable. Our records show that ministry staff were of the opinion that records would be in our

hands no later than the end of November. They were off by five months.

Something is fishy, so I ask again: Did you or anyone in your office direct ministry officials to withhold those freedom-of-information requests?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I have a note from, I believe, the Information and Privacy Commissioner: an acknowledgment of contentious issues process from the 2004 report. It says, "It is our understanding that the Ontario government still has a process in place to give ministers" information "about the disclosure of potentially controversial records under FOI, which, on its own, is not a problem. We are pleased that, over the past year, we have not seen any evidence to show that this process is having an adverse effect on the 30-day statutory time frame for responding to FOI requests."

There is a process that is in place. The ministry, and I think virtually all ministries in the government—as they would have had to do when you were in power—follow exactly the same process. That is why, when it was established originally under legislation, there was a process that was set in place. This process is followed by ministries of the government, as it should be.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

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Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The seriousness of this nature is appalling. When November passed without the Ontario PC caucus being given the records, we called the deputy FOI coordinator in your ministry. She reconfirmed that all materials were gathered and she saw no reason why we shouldn't receive the records by the end of January. When the deadline passed, we called her again and she said she will have the records by the end of February. At the beginning of March, she emailed to say the records were going to be "sent in a week or two," but they never were.

It smells fishy, Minister. How can we believe that neither you nor any of your staff—political communications or otherwise—did not direct the ministry officials to withhold the FOI? Please answer that question.

Hon. James J. Bradley: There are wild allegations that keep coming from the opposition. I know you're on a fishing trip in this particular case.

I want to say to the member that we follow the appropriate process in any of the ministries of the government, including the ministry for which I am responsible. The information is gathered in as much detail as possible.

There are rules that are set out by the Information and Privacy Commissioner. I can say that, in comparing your previous government with our government in terms of the responses, our rate of response has been 88%, which is the best ever. When your government happened to be in power and your fellow colleagues were in power, the response rate at that time was only 50%. So there's a substantial improvement that has taken place over this period of time that must—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Back to the Minister of Correctional Services. By April 1, the freedom-of-information records we requested on cable TV packages of provincial jails were 125 days overdue. The Ontario PC caucus had to call the deputy FOI coordinator of your ministry and told her that the delay constituted a “deemed refusal.” It was only when we threatened to haul you in front of the privacy commissioner that you were finally forced to release those records. Even then it took two more weeks for the ministry to send them.

Why should anyone believe that you and your staff had nothing to do with withholding these records?

Hon. James J. Bradley: First of all, I want to correct something I said before, because I think it's important to be able to correct these. I know my friend Norm Sterling would want me to correct this. The response rate for our government is not 88%, as I said it was; in fact it's 91.5%, compared to the 50% for the previous government, and we're striving to move it up. Yours was 50%; ours is over 91%. I know he'd want to compare that.

I can say to the member that we make every effort to provide the information. I know that when her leader was asked in the hallway whether he would change the policy of his own government in regard to cable television, I believe his answer out there was no—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Look, even the timing of when the records were finally delivered is fishy. The records were dropped off at the PC caucus on Tuesday afternoon. Before we could even open the envelope, a member of the Queen's Park press gallery already reported that you were claiming credit for cancelling premium cable television packages at jails. Then, you were caught scrambling, running from office to office to office with the press gallery to try to spin your yarn.

Who can believe that no one in your office, whether it was you, your political communications team or others, did not interfere with the release of those FOI records while you scrambled to cook up your latest PR stunt?

Hon. James J. Bradley: First of all, can any member of this House envision me running down the halls? You usually don't get compliments from the opposition. I want to thank the member from Nepean for the compliment that I could run down the halls. Some of your members might be in the same category, but I assure you, I could not do that.

The information was provided in the normal fashion that it is provided. I know that your members have had some fun with it. Our members have responded to the fun that you have provoked, but I want to tell the member that we follow the normal practice that has taken place. We're 91.5%, and you were 50%—big improvement.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Minister, I can assure you it was so memorable yesterday—that's why we're raising it in

the House—that you were running down the halls on the third floor of this Legislature. Listen, Minister, we would really like to believe you, but something is really fishy. We would like to see for ourselves.

Will you commit, here and now, that if we file an FOI request today, we will receive all correspondence between you or your political staff and the ministry with respect to our freedom-of-information requests for records on premium cable packages of provincial jails within 30 days, as prescribed by law?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Well, I want to say to the member that we will follow the normal practice which is followed.

But I know the member would want to compare, because she would say, “What was the record?” Before you got here, to be fair, before she got here, the PC record in FOI in 2003—and some will remember; Jim, you will remember—was: energy, 28%; citizenship and immigration, 49%; tourism, 8%; natural resources, 57%; culture, 60%; and finance, 68%. I can assure the member that we have moved overall to 91.5%.

We're always striving to improve, and the member will know that we will follow the normal procedure, as established by the freedom-of-information commissioner.

TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. In study after study after study, the evidence could not be clearer: Corporate tax cuts don't create jobs. In just one week, three different studies of Statistics Canada data have proven conclusively that as corporate tax rates have fallen over the past decade, business investment in jobs and machinery have fallen right along with it.

My question to the Premier: When will this Premier finally admit that his tagalong with Stephen Harper's policy of corporate tax giveaways simply does not create jobs here in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I want to thank the member for the question. I was pleased to release Ontario's economic accounts this morning that show real growth for last year: 3.8%, which is higher than Canada, higher than the United States. I also want to point out that real net exports rose 11.2% in 2010, in spite of a rising dollar. That means good news for economies all across the province. Most importantly, I want to report that we saw increased business investment in this province over the last year.

Our policies are designed to help families, designed to improve education and health care, and they're working. It's about a better future for our children. We're turning the corner and working with all Ontarians. We have a brighter future for all of our children.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: The minister never said a word about jobs.

One of the studies says that as corporate tax rates fell 30% over a decade, business investment in plant and

machinery went from 7.7% of GDP to 5.5%. Another study said that the 200 largest corporations that benefited the most from tax cuts created fewer jobs than the companies with smaller tax cuts. Study number three shows that the combined federal-provincial corporate tax rate went from 50% to 29% over 25 years. Business capital spending declined notably.

When will this Premier and this finance minister admit that the corporate tax giveaway policies that he follows along with Stephen Harper simply do not create jobs?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Net new jobs—96% of the jobs lost in the recession have been regained. Now, compare that to the United States, which I think is at 14%. Compare it to the UK and a variety of other jurisdictions. Ontario leads.

1050

The other interesting information that we put out today is that the average weekly earnings of an Ontario worker have risen by 4.4%. Over the same period, the average hourly wage of an Ontario worker has risen by 4%. These numbers are solid. They compare well to other jurisdictions.

The final point I would make: With respect to real business spending on machinery and equipment in 2010, the most recent numbers—your numbers are years out of date—11%, leading Canada—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: Given an opportunity to believe Statistics Canada or this minister, I know I would choose Statistics Canada.

Statistics Canada data proves that corporate tax cuts don't create jobs. Three out of the four federal leaders running—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: Excuse me. Four out of the five federal leaders running in this election, including Mr. Ignatieff, don't believe that corporate tax cuts create jobs. The majority of the public doesn't believe that corporate tax giveaways create jobs.

With so much evidence against this government and the waste of public money, why don't the Premier and this finance minister finally admit that his policy of corporate tax giveaways does not create jobs and is just bad economics that is spun here every day?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Our tax plan for jobs and growth is increasing jobs. You can check Stats Canada, you can check every legitimate source that says the same thing: 96% of jobs lost in the recession are back. Real wages are up. Average hourly wages are up.

There's still more to go, because Ontarians are still looking for work, and that's why we've put in place the policies we've put in place.

I am proud that business investment has gone up some 11% in the last year.

I would remind the member of what he said just a couple of weeks ago. This is what the member for Beaches—East York said: "I mean, the tax burden has gone down on everyone, in spite of what people think.

You know, taxes have gone down, literally on all income groups."

He's right. Our plan is working. We're lowering taxes for people, for businesses, making this a better, more—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. Last month, Bonnie McLaughlin, a Hamilton senior who lives with her husband and who recently retired after 40 years, wrote to us saying, "I'm tired of eating cold food in the dark and not having clean clothes to wear because I can't afford to use the hydro to perform these simple daily functions."

Why won't this government help Ontarians like Bonnie and her husband and take the HST off hydro?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm not sure of the basis for this question, but I'll respond nonetheless.

The fact of the matter is that the NDP, on countless occasions, stood in this House and asked that we lower the cost of electricity by 8%. We've done it by 10%, and at some point, I would ask that they acknowledge that and accept that as good public policy.

I would also ask that they accept that the work we are doing to rebuild 80% of our electricity system over the course of the next 20 years is absolutely essential to ensure that we have all the power we need to power our schools, to light our homes, our factories and our hospitals, and power our economy.

We're doing important work on behalf of our economy, on behalf of our families. We know that there's a cost associated with this. There's no getting around that, and that's why we reduced electricity costs by 10%.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: More and more Ontarians are struggling to pay their hydro bills. Marlene van Droogenbroeck, also from Hamilton, writes, "Electricity far outweighs all [my] other bills. My bill has gone up at least 25% since smart meters have been around and [the] HST introduced."

Hydro rates are rising because the government is spending billions on smart meters, which don't reduce electricity use, and on expensive new nuclear plants—instead of cheaper conservation and energy efficiency.

Why does the McGuinty government care more about supporting its friends in the power industry than making hydro affordable for people like Bonnie and Marlene?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I say to my honourable colleague, it may be that he believes that we can actually do all this work to repair and restore vitality to our electricity system, but that's magic, and we don't have magic on this side of the House; we just have reality and a sense of responsibility.

We're going to continue investing in the system. We're trying to do it in a very smart way. In addition to expanding the capacity at Niagara Falls, for example, we're investing in renewables. We have the fastest-

growing renewables sector in all of North America. It's enabling us to shut down dirty coal-fired generation. We've shut down eight plants so far; that's like taking 2.5 million cars off our roads. We think that's important to our families. Doctors and nurses have been telling us for years now that coal-fired generation is making our people sick, so we're actually acting on that. We're introducing new clean energy, and we're creating thousands of new jobs as we build an exciting, new clean energy industry in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): final supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: The McGuinty government keeps bungling the hydro policy. Today, the Toronto Star reports that a high-efficiency co-generation plant at the Toronto airport, which uses natural gas for heating and producing electricity, only runs sporadically because the OPA refuses to buy cost-effective electricity from co-generation plants. According to the article, that's because the OPA has been focused on nuclear.

When will the McGuinty government start focusing on making electricity affordable for families instead of pursuing expensive and unnecessary new nuclear plants?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that the NDP have always stood in opposition to nuclear energy, even though 50% of our electricity in Ontario comes from nuclear energy.

What surprises me is that they stand against our policy to build here in Ontario an exciting, new, renewable energy industry. We want to position ourselves so that we're not only meeting our demand here in Ontario for wind turbines and solar panels, but we want to ensure that we can meet growing American demand so that our people will be getting good jobs in a new sector.

Again, I'm confused why it is that the NDP don't stand in favour of harnessing the power of the wind and the power of the sun to create good clean energy and thousands of new jobs for our children and grandchildren at the same time. I thought they were in favour of standing up for a safe, clean, strong environment. That's exactly what our policy does: shutting down coal, building up renewables.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: To the Minister of Correctional Services: I listened to your responses to my colleague's questions earlier and, despite six chances to do so, not once did you categorically rule out interference in our FOI request by anyone in your office. You just talked about process, not your conduct in this case.

Will you agree to have a committee of the Legislature review ministerial interference in our freedom-of-information requests for records of high-definition TV premium cable packages in our provincial jails? Will you agree to that?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I know that the member would not want to go back into the history of this because I can tell you that the compliance rate of this government

is substantially higher than the previous government's. I saw a figure just a moment ago that said that even in the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the compliance rate is far greater today than it was when—here it is; the House leader has given it to me.

In 2010, the 30-day compliance rate was 89%, and 95% overall. So you're probably asking yourself the question, what was it when the Conservative government was in power? The answer is, in 2002, it was only 78%. I know—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Well, Minister, there's something fishy about it taking over 125 days and the threat to haul you before the privacy commissioner to force you to release the records. It's simply not credible to believe ministry staff needed five extra months to figure out how to work the photocopying machine and fix the problem with the copies they initially made. You look pretty suspicious after scrambling through the halls—and we understand you did have a pair of new Reebok Pumps on when you did that—and you were being embarrassed by what the records showed you were up to.

I'd like to hear your side of the story and ask a few questions in committee. Why won't you agree to a committee review of interference in the release of the FOI records that we requested on this side of the House?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'll tell you, the interference I was worried about was the interference in Carleton-Mississippi Mills, where the member for Lanark was trying to unseat my good friend Norm Sterling—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the honourable member, as I've reminded members within this House, that we use riding names or titles and not individuals' names.

1100

Hon. James J. Bradley: The riding was Carleton-Mississippi Mills. There is a member who has served for some 34 years in the riding of Mississippi Mills. Your colleague the member for Lanark and a cabal of extreme right-wingers deposed my good friend the member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills. So I would be very concerned about—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. Minister, you refused the request of many people in northern Ontario to allow Bill 151 to go for committee hearings in northern Ontario. Then you sent Mr. Brown, the member from Algoma, into the committee in order to make sure that we didn't travel into those northern communities. I just quote:

"So I think we need to proceed," said Mr. Brown in committee. "People have had adequate time to make their

presentations, and we're providing another opportunity on the dates we've described. So that's where we're at....

"I've said what I needed to say. We need to move on. Northerners have had ample opportunity to comment on this."

But then he goes home and he speaks to the media, in this case Mid-North Monitor, and he's quoted as saying, "I don't want to see consultations in the cities"—I suppose he means Toronto—"that is what I said, because that is not where the people directly affected by this legislation live," explained Brown. "I want to see the hearings go to the communities directly affected by this legislation, places like Espanola."

How do you square off those two comments?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I think we all understand, including the member, how important this legislation is, which is why we had such an extensive consultation period—in two sections, in fact—before we introduced the legislation. Indeed, may I say, in a perfect world, we would love to travel all across the province in terms of the forestry communities.

What I want to be able to say is that we've worked very hard to bring this legislation forward. We've worked very hard with industry, with municipalities and with many other stakeholders to bring forward this legislation. We believe that this will help reinvigorate the forestry sector, and we do want to move it forward.

I am very pleased with the representation that we have had from northerners at our hearings this past week: from municipal leaders, from First Nation organizations and aboriginal leaders, and also from other organizations from the forestry sector. We've heard loud and clear. We look forward to finding a way to improve the legislation, because that's—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, the issue is this: The people want us to say the same thing when we're in this Legislature that we say to our people back home. In this particular case, the person in charge of the committee, Mr. Brown, is saying one thing completely different on the record in committee, opposing hearings, and on the other hand, is going back home and saying to people, "No, we need to have hearings up in Manitoulin."

My question to you is, is that what being a Liberal is, being able to walk on the fence without falling off on both sides?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: We have worked extremely hard on this legislation and brought in all members of the Legislature in terms of this process. We've also done significant consultations in northern Ontario—two different sections. The first time was before we brought forward the proposal, and then when we brought forward our modernization proposal, we went and consulted all across the north and other parts of the province as well.

The fact is, this is legislation that we feel strongly is going to help reinvigorate the forest industry to deal with situations where, in the past, there was a hoarding of wood. We want to see our forestry sector revived. We

want to see our Ontario wood put back to work. We want to see our people put back to work. That's why we moved forward on our wood supply competition.

What I can say to you is, this is an extraordinarily important piece of legislation. We're extremely grateful for the presentations that have been made by a series of northerners here in Toronto. I look forward to continuing to carry on this process of consultation in a very significant way.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Bob Delaney: This question is for the Minister of the Environment. Ontarians know they have a role to play in protecting the air that we breathe by taking transit, carpooling or simply walking to where we're going. My friends and neighbours from the western Mississauga neighbourhoods of Streetsville, Meadowvale and Lisgar also want to know that their government is doing its part as well, developing policies to conserve energy and to reduce emissions.

Minister, here's what some people are asking me at meetings and on the train. With the recent announcement of the clean energy benefit and much of the focus on rebuilding Ontario's electricity system, the talk is often about electricity generation and transmission. In what way is conservation still a government priority to protect the air that we breathe?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to share with my friend, and I want him to tell his constituents in Streetsville, Meadowvale and Lisgar, that the air is cleaner today because of conservation. Conservation is absolutely key, because we don't have to produce the electricity in the first place. In fact, the McGuinty government's conservation efforts have saved over 1,700 megawatts of electricity. That's like taking some 500,000 homes right off the grid.

Now, we on this side of the House refuse to go back to the dark and dirty days when the previous government was burning dirty coal to make electricity, where they saw that rise by 127% and air quality go down. Today the air is cleaner in your community and right across this province because we are phasing out dirty coal-fired generation. When we get to that wonderful day, that will be the equivalent of taking some seven million cars off the roads. That is why conservation is so absolutely crucial to all that we are doing to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Our province's commitment to conservation and renewable energy is to have clean air to breathe and jobs for our children.

Young people are particularly aware that Ontario is doing something bold and innovative. They don't want to go back to failed energy policies of the past. People who remember the bad old days of the 1990s do not want to see coal emissions increase, or Ontario backslide into being a net importer of energy, or to see diesel generators placed in our cities in case the power grid fails.

Wind and solar are now a small but growing part of Ontario's electricity supply mix. With some critics affirming the Conservative Party's commitment to go backwards to burning dirty coal, will Ontario really eliminate coal from our province's energy mix?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to assure the member that we will, and I'll tell you why: because our children are counting on us to do that. Their lungs are more important than some company's dirty profit. I say to the members opposite that we stand with the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, with the Canadian Lung Association; we stand with the Ontario Medical Association, the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, the lung association, the asthma society, who tell us that dirty coal-fired generation results in the pollution that leads to the number one reason that our children are being admitted to emergency rooms. On this side of the House, we believe that the values that are important are that we must protect our children, and I would invite yet again the members of the opposition to join us in putting our children's health first. That is the most—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew will withdraw the comment that he just made.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Premier. Ron Sapsford was paid three quarters of a million dollars out of a hospital budget last year, but you won't say for what. Ontario PCs believe the money you handed the former Deputy Minister of Health to go away after the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle would have been better spent on front-line health care. The same amount of money you gave Sapsford would pay for over 32,500 hours of home respite in my riding of Leeds–Grenville.

How did your priorities become so out of touch that you used health care dollars for a sweetheart deal for Sapsford instead of front-line health care?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question from my honourable colleague.

I draw to his attention a statement recently made by a newly nominated candidate in their party, Mr. Gaudet. He said that the HST should be lowered from 13% to 10%. That's \$9 billion. I expect that Mr. Gaudet will be very influential in lending shape to the thinking of that party on economic matters. Nine billion dollars: I want you to just try to imagine the devastation that would cause to important public services like health care and education.

Speaker, I just don't think they have any moral authority when it comes to standing up for public health care in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?
1110

Mr. Steve Clark: It's not about your greedy HST tax grab; it's about front-line health care.

It isn't only the mystery payout to Ron Sapsford that cheats Ontario families of front-line health care. Earlier this week, we brought to your attention the fact that your local health integration networks are now all part of the million-dollar club. In my own riding, LHIN executive salaries have ballooned from half a million dollars to \$1.4 million last year. LHIN bureaucrats don't spend a minute with patients or do a single surgery. Just one year of what you paid them would have been supporting the operating budget of the Beth Donovan Hospice in North Grenville for 10 years.

What has happened to you that has caused you to become so out of touch with Ontario families who want their money for front-line health care, not—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I attended the announcement of a new MRI at the Ottawa Hospital with Dr. Keon a few days ago—that's Conservative senator Dr. Keon. This is what he said on the subject of LHINs: "As a Canadian senator, I conducted research on health systems across the globe and one thing was absolutely clear: to best serve the needs of a population, health care decisions must be made at the local level."

I am in perfect agreement with Senator Keon, and I can't understand for the life of me why the party opposite is in favour of big government—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Simcoe North. Member from Simcoe–Grey.

New question?

NUCLEAR SAFETY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Minister of Energy: In light of the contamination of Bruce Nuclear workers last year, nuclear safety is more important than ever. Given this, can the minister explain why the Ontario Energy Board has urged Ontario Power Generation to cut radiation protection staff levels at the Pickering and Darlington nuclear plants by 28%?

Hon. Brad Duguid: In this province, we will never, ever contemplate any diminishment of safety at any time. Ontario Power Generation would never, ever contemplate doing anything that would ever jeopardize safety in our nuclear plants. There are issues that they are engaged in with the Ontario Energy Board as they do the very best they can to maintain as small of increases as they possibly can with regard to their budget. But let me assure you, never, ever would Ontario Power Generation contemplate jeopardizing safety under any circumstances.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: So I guess that's why the workers are going to court to try to get these nuclear safety people reinstated.

Ontarians expect every effort to ensure that our nuclear plants are safe. However, this government is prepared to stand by and do nothing while radiation protection staffing levels are cut at Ontario nuclear plants. The

Society of Energy Professionals who run those plants says that this cut in staffing could “undermine nuclear safety” in Ontario. Does the minister really believe that now is the time to cut nuclear safety protection in Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The issue with regard to OPG is a case of seeking clarification in terms of law. It won't impact the rate increase of 1% that they were awarded. It would remain below that. It's an issue that's in keeping with our process.

I'll quote from the OEB, because the member doesn't appear to want to believe me on this. The OEB said, in their recent report: “An important part of fairness and transparency is the ability of a party to appeal decisions of the board. The board may, upon receiving a request, review a decision or order. Decisions of the board may also be appealed to the Divisional Court on questions of law or jurisdiction.”

That is what this is, and I can once again assure the member—he's yakking right now and doesn't want to hear it—that the OPG will never, ever jeopardize safety.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Mr. Khalil Ramal: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. While we are seeing the Ontario economy turn the corner, I'm still concerned for students in the province who need to find work during their summer break, which helps them to pay for their schooling and living expenses during the academic year.

However, there is good news for the youth in the province of Ontario. According to Statistics Canada, the unemployment rate of full-time Canadian students between the age of 15 and 24 has declined since last year to 14.4%. I know there are numerous employers in my riding of London—Fanshawe that employed a number of students last summer, including East Park Kartland/Watercoasters, the Greater London International Airport Authority, East Park Golf Gardens and the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority, to name a few.

Minister, can you tell us and tell the House what you're doing to support students this upcoming summer to support their—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. John Milloy: I want to thank the member for the question.

I'm pleased to say that yesterday, we formally launched the Ontario summer jobs strategy for the coming summer. I was able to outline for the public the fact that, in the most recent budget, we are contributing an additional \$22.5 million towards summer jobs in the province, bringing the Ontario total to \$90 million, with the target that we want to help well over 100,000 students this summer as they gain valuable experience and earn money for their studies this fall.

Among the programs that are offered, we have the summer jobs service—it's the largest component of our strategy—which offers employers \$2 an hour to help

them employ students and bring them on to their team for the summer months—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Minister, employment agency experts note that the transition between students graduating and landing a full-time job in their field is getting longer. I'm pleased to know that Ontario has recovered 91% of the jobs lost during the last recession, and nearly 84% of those jobs are full-time jobs.

But in the meantime, so many different students are finding it a difficult time to find a job in their profession, which they studied a long time for. Minister, can you tell us and tell the House what you are doing to help students to find a job in their profession and pay for their expenses, fees and tuition?

Hon. John Milloy: It's very important that we work with graduating students to help them find jobs in their chosen area, but it's also important that we work with students already in school to give them the opportunity to broaden their horizons, to be exposed to different sectors, to hone their skills and get an idea of the many opportunities that are available in the working world. That's why the summer jobs program is so important. It allows students to get a wide range of experiences and opportunities.

As I mentioned, we offer incentives to employers. We also have a very robust program within the broader public service to hire students and, through the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, we offer opportunities for young entrepreneurs to start their own business and to receive the support they want, as well as a grant of up to \$3,000 to help them put together their summer job program and really hone their entrepreneurial skills.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Education. The minister has ordered a change in school bus transportation procurement, and it is destroying our rural economy, as independent, family-owned businesses are being forced out of business and losing everything, including millions invested in school buses. According to the Independent School Bus Operators Association, your policy is giving multinational corporations a complete monopoly on school transportation. Minister, why are you punishing these independent bus operators for your government scandals?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I want to thank the honourable member for again bringing this to the attention of myself and to the floor of this Legislature.

What I can say to the honourable member, first of all, is that she would appreciate that the Provincial Auditor has made some recommendations around how we engage services. The Provincial Auditor has indicated that the way that boards have been engaging school bus services has not been through a competitive process. So we have been working with representatives from the bussing

industry to put together a plan on how we might achieve this.

We weren't sure if we had it right, so we put together a pilot. It was piloted in southern Ontario. We are very carefully reviewing those results. There is a pilot under way in northern Ontario as well. But I want to assure the members of this assembly and the members in the province of Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

1120

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: To the minister: Unfortunately, these pilots have demonstrated the devastating impact on the small, independent operator at the behest and enhancement of the multinationals. I'll give you an example: Your pilot process in Wellington county resulted in 103 of the 105 bus routes being awarded to two multinational companies at the expense of Ontario's small businesses. People like Roland Montgomery, Vaughn Richmond and Lesa McDougall have been successful for years with their family business. They're now being squeezed out by these monopolies—multinational companies.

Time is running out. I ask the minister: Will you engage, now that you have the facts, in a new round of discussions with ISBOA—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: First of all, I think that it's important that I would state that if you look at the results of the pilots, there's no question that there are some larger companies that have been successful and there have been some smaller mom-and-pop companies that have been successful. Having said that, I have already made it clear—actually, with the Premier—that we will be working with the Independent School Bus Operators and the school bus operators of Ontario to very carefully go over the results of the pilots.

We do want to ensure that the school bus systems in the province of Ontario will be able to continue the safe and quality service that families and students have enjoyed. We want to be sure that it happens in a way that the Auditor General will appreciate this is the best way to spend the almost \$1 billion that we spend in transportation services. So we have been engaged with school bus operators—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. It's a very simple one: Why won't the McGuinty government recognize access to affordable housing—an international law, as declared by the UN—as a basic human right?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: We're very, very proud of the new legislation that has been debated before the House. We're very proud that our long-term affordable housing

strategy finally puts people first. We're very, very proud that with this strategy we are giving municipalities, the service managers, the local service managers, more decision-making in order to meet the local needs of people in their communities. We think that it's not only human; we think that it's right that that decision-making be done at the local level so that we can best meet the needs of those people requiring long-term affordable housing.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: As a former UN special rapporteur on housing, Miloon Kothari, said in his letter dated April 6, 2011, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, amendments to include targets and timelines for eliminating homelessness are, "in my view, critical to ensuring compliance with Ontario's obligations under international human rights law...." The NDP suggested these amendments and the government voted them down. Why is this government ignoring the United Nations and violating international law?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The reality is that this legislation has received first and second reading. There has been broad public consultation. We debated, clause by clause, the amendments that were put forward by all three parties in this House. We've come back with legislation that we are sure is very, very strong legislation, that will meet the needs of those requiring long-term affordable housing. We hope that the official opposition and the third party will support the legislation. We hope, in the future, they will not vote against funding for long-term affordable housing as they've done in the past. We believe that it's not only human to do; we believe that it's right for them to support long-term affordable housing money.

SPORTS FUNDING

Mr. Rick Johnson: My question is for the Minister of Health Promotion and Sport. Amateur athletes at the arenas, gyms and fields in my riding know that good equipment and top-notch facilities can help them score that winning goal or make the basket. Coaches are another key to athletic success but they rarely get enough credit. Ontario is currently celebrating both Coaches Week and National Volunteer Week. Athletes and parents in my riding are doing their part by reaching out to coaches to say thanks for the invaluable community service they provide.

Recognition is a simple but great way to support these selfless volunteers. Will this government also do its part to recognize coaches?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I want to take this opportunity to thank the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock for his interest in athletes and coaches. Our government is indeed pleased to be celebrating coaches this week and, in fact, all year round.

Those who ask for no recognition are often those who deserve it most. Coaches embody this selfless volunteer

spirit. Athletes receive much glory; however, coaches are the wind beneath their sails at every practice and every competition. It is our coaches to whom our athletes owe much of their success.

In late February, I attended the Ontario Coaches Conference to deliver my appreciation through awards to outstanding individuals who are nurturing our young athletes. This evening, I will honour coaches and athletes at the Ontario Sport Awards and will announce Ontario's male and female amateur coaches of the year.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Johnson: I'm pleased to hear that we are recognizing our volunteer coaches—a wealth of knowledge and encouragement for our young people in Ontario. However, recognition and thanks only go so far. At some point, the government needs to say, "Not only do we value you, but here's how we are going to support your work." The minister knows that the quality of the athletes that Ontario sends to sporting events such as the Olympics is largely dependent on the quality of their coaches. Gold medals cannot be won with words of encouragement alone. Will the minister commit to financially supporting coaching in Ontario?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I commend Ontario coaches for their dedication and commitment and for their great contribution to our province. My ministry has a long-standing funding relationship with the Coaches Association of Ontario. This support helps to deliver over 4,000 coaching workshops per year across the province.

We established the landmark Quest for Gold program in 2006, which not only supports athletes but also provides almost \$800,000 per year to support and enhance coaching programs. Our dedication to the Quest for Gold program was reaffirmed in our 2011 budget.

Our government supports our athletes and coaches, and I urge the opposition to reconsider its intention to reject this continued support for athletes and coaches. An active Ontario is a healthy and prosperous Ontario.

I want to thank the coaches for helping our government to further this very important—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

RED TAPE REDUCTION

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Small businesses in Ontario are crying out for relief from the burden of regulation and taxation your government puts on them. You claim to be open for business, yet your actions contradict your words.

First you broke your promise to cut regulations by 25% over two years. Then you said in a statement that it's not the number but the quality of deregulation that matters, even as you claim that you have cut the regulatory burden by 15%.

Minister, businesses want to see the proof of fewer burdens. When will you release the full list of all the burdens you've identified and the full list of burdens you

claim you have cut, so we can know if these cuts are real?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Thanks so much for the question. I actually appreciate this because it gives us an opportunity to talk about all the great things we've done, in particular in our Open for Business initiative.

As I said in the House last week, we have already eliminated 700,000 burdens for small business across all of our industries—70,000. This member opposite will remember when we brought representatives in this very House from the CFIB, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, and from the CME, Canadian manufacturers—these industry associations that represent the lion's share of small business in the House with us celebrating the elimination of 70,000 burdens across a number of ministries of our government.

We acknowledge that we have more work to do, and I look forward to your next question because I'm happy to report, time and time again—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mrs. Julia Munro: A local hotel owner has told me of the burdens he faces from government red tape every day just from government inspections, most of them unannounced: building inspectors, bylaw inspectors, fire inspectors, liquor inspectors, twice-yearly food inspections, smoking bylaw inspections, occupational health and safety inspections and Electrical Safety Authority inspections.

Minister, when will my constituent see a reduction in burdens? Or will your list remain a secret?

1130

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I have to tell the member opposite that just last week, we began our Open for Business initiative with the hotelier sector of the economy, and we brought small, medium-sized, and even large businesses that run hotels into our government to meet with us. I can guarantee the public that we will not eliminate fire inspections, we will not eliminate health and safety inspections. What we are doing is working together to find a way to do it well so that it isn't inconvenient, but rather, it makes it easier for businesses to comply with what the general public expects, and that is a safe place to go to as a consumer, a safe place for workers to be in to work.

The people who are in business also appreciate this, and that's why they're delighted to be working with us. They were here with us in the House just last week as we launched this very sector for—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Mr. Paul Miller: To the Premier: The Premier's number two, the finance minister, likes to promote Research in Motion products. He wanted to deliver the budget using a RIM PlayBook. It turns out his one-man advertising campaign cost \$150,000, paid for by RIM and the

Balsillie family to the Liberal Party. Does the Premier consider this corporate shilling appropriate?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I am very proud of RIM and their remarkable achievements for Ontarians. They have been creating jobs in Kitchener–Waterloo, Ottawa, Toronto and right across the province. I am very proud that they participate in our democracy and contribute to political parties, and they do so according to the law that was established by this Legislature.

The member opposite probably doesn't know this: Finance ministers traditionally get new shoes at budget time, but we don't make shoes in Canada anymore. We do, however, make BlackBerry's. We are going to make PlayBooks, and I think that member ought to be proud of the achievements of RIM and proud of the achievements of the tens of thousands of people who work in that important industry, year in and year out.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Speaker.

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, I can't—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

Please continue.

Mr. Paul Miller: It appears the Premier and the finance minister have found post-political gigs in advertising. What other products are they prepared to hawk, and how much will the Liberal Party make in return?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Members will please come to order. They have done so well through this question period.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

I just remind the honourable member that he, in both his question and in his supplementary, was coming very close to a line and crossing a line of imputing a motive. I think on the second one you did cross the line, in my opinion, and I would just ask that you withdraw your comment.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'll withdraw the comment.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I am proud to promote RIM and their products, and I will continue to promote them. I am proud to promote the cars that are built in St. Catharines, in Oshawa and in Brampton, and I am proud that the member opposite and every member of his caucus owns a RIM and uses it day in and day out to promote their product. And you know what? When large public sector unions donate to their party and they advocate on behalf of them, that's quite acceptable and quite understandable.

So I say to the Balsillies, to the Mike Lazaridis of the world, keep up the good work. Keep investing in Ontario. Keep innovating. Keep paying taxes. Keep helping us build schools and jobs and education. It's about a bright future for all Ontarians, and I welcome—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended.

NOTICE OF REASONED AMENDMENT

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 71(b), the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has notified the Clerk of his intention to file notice of a reasoned amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 179, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act respecting adoption and the provision of care and maintenance. The order for second reading of Bill 179 may therefore not be called today.

DEFERRED VOTES

BETTER TOMORROW FOR ONTARIO ACT

(BUDGET MEASURES), 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR DES LENDEMAINS
MEILLEURS POUR L'ONTARIO
(MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 173, An Act respecting 2011 Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters / Projet de loi 173, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires de 2011, l'affectation anticipée de crédits et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1139 to 1144.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Best, Margaret
Broten, Laurel C.
Brownell, Jim
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic

Dickson, Joe
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoskins, Eric
Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Johnson, Rick
Kular, Kuldip
Kwinter, Monte
Levac, Dave
Mangat, Amrit
McGuinty, Dalton
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John

Mitchell, Carol
Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Oraziotti, David
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Sousa, Charles
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those opposed?

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
DiNovo, Cheri
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Gélinas, France

Hampton, Howard
Hardeman, Ernie
Hillier, Randy
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Kormos, Peter
MacLeod, Lisa
Marchese, Rosario
Miller, Norm

Miller, Paul
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
Prue, Michael
Savoline, Joyce
Tabuns, Peter
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakubuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):

The ayes are 52; the nays are 27.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to the order of the House dated April 13, 2011, the bill is ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will come to order. I've never heard such emotion out of a vote before.

This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1147 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I am absolutely delighted to introduce to the Legislature the consul general of the Republic of Cuba, the Honourable Jorge Soberón. He is here today to strengthen the ties between Cuba and Ontario, in terms of our economy, our culture and our commerce. Welcome to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome back to the Legislature, Consul General.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY**

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Last night, Ontario PC leader Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC Party celebrated a major milestone at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, as we hosted the largest Toronto Leader's Dinner in the party's history, raising unbelievable amounts of money—record amounts of money.

In his keynote speech, Tim Hudak spoke about the consequences to Ontario families of staying on the path that we are on today. Ontario families are struggling to make ends meet because of the HST, eco tax and skyrocketing hydro bills, and if given the chance, Dalton McGuinty will raise taxes once again. Hudak said that only an Ontario PC government will deliver a focused government, lower taxes and provide much-needed relief for Ontario families.

As of last night, the Ontario PC Party team now includes 72 hard-working candidates from across Ontario

who are running for the October 6, 2011, election. In the next election, Ontario families will have a clear choice for change between the out-of-touch McGuinty Liberals who will raise taxes again and a Tim Hudak Ontario PC government that plans to cut taxes across the board and give families and seniors the relief they need.

The size of this year's event shows there is a momentum and there is a strong desire for change in Ontario, and only Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC Party will deliver that change.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind the honourable member—I let it go, but he used a couple of names a number of times in that, and I would remind all members of the practice within this House of using riding names or titles.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Before I talk about the excitement of the new book tax credit that our government is going to be introducing, I'd like to speak for a few moments about the 2011 budget, which has proved that Ontario is turning the corner to a better tomorrow.

Our plan is working: The economy is improving and jobs are coming back. The 2011 budget is the next step. It contains strategic investments to help farmers, and for students we will add more than 60,000 new post-secondary spaces. It will expand breast cancer screening and improve children's mental health services.

The budget also contains—and this is very exciting for me—the Ontario book publishing tax credit. This credit is available to companies that publish and promote literary works by Canadian authors and also relates to publishing an electronic or digital version of a literary work.

Qualifying businesses will receive 30% of pre-press, printing and marketing expenses, up to a maximum of \$30,000. This credit, finally, will help to promote great Canadian authors while also encouraging Ontario businesses.

We have made these investments while also protecting education, health care and economic growth, and that's why I'm delighted to say something about this very exciting book tax credit in Ontario.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I rise today because Oxford and Ontario families are frustrated. They're doing everything they can to conserve energy, and still their hydro bills continue to spiral out of control.

I have an email from one family who are looking at an increase of \$3,000 to \$5,000 a year—this from a family that has an outdoor clothesline in the summer and an indoor one in the winter. The adults are already showering before 7 a.m. to take advantage of the off-peak times. They use the fireplace to heat when they can. Premier, they want to know, "Should we wake our children at 5:30 a.m. to save money? Should we have them stay up past healthy bedtimes? Should we not heat our home? Not

clean our dishes? We are quite frustrated and at a loss as to what to do.”

I have another email from a constituent who is frustrated with the time-of-use pricing. She says, “I must vacuum during the day because my husband (who starts work before 6 a.m.) goes to bed around 9 p.m. Why should I have to pay 27% to 55% more to clean my house just because we live on a different schedule?”

Premier, it is because of people and families like these that our leader, Tim Hudak, has committed that a PC government would make—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just remind the honourable member again about the use of names.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: —has committed that a PC government would make smart meters optional. If they work for families, they can use them. If they do not, they go back to the flat rate.

Premier, won't you admit that is the right thing to do and stop punishing these families?

TAIBU COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I was pleased to attend the official opening celebration in true African style of TAIBU Community Health Centre yesterday. TAIBU CHC is a new multidisciplinary, not-for-profit, community-led health centre serving the Malvern neighbourhood in Scarborough–Rouge River.

TAIBU is a Kiswahili word used as a greeting by well-wishers that means “Be in good health.” The name captures the vision of TAIBU, which promotes healthy, vibrant and sustainable communities who create their own solutions.

TAIBU provides comprehensive primary health care, mental health support, and social services combined with health promotion programs and activities to all the residents of Malvern, with a special focus on meeting the specific needs of members of our black community. TAIBU's vision is to become the model health centre for the greater Toronto area for the black community.

I'd like to thank the sponsor group, the Black Health Alliance, led by Dr. Chris Morgan, for their vision, commitment and dedication to this project that led to the great opening ceremony yesterday in Scarborough–Malvern.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I rise today to share with the House a very concerning development in my riding of Kitchener–Waterloo and indeed the entire Waterloo region. For the first time ever, our residents repeatedly face critical shortages of ambulances—up to 17 times a month.

According to the Waterloo Record, “Since July, no local ambulances have been available for emergencies between six and 17 times a month, and the duration of these ‘code reds’ has been between 14 and 26 minutes.”

This problem is not caused by a lack of ambulances or a shortage in paramedics, but by this government's complete failure in addressing Ontario's need for more long-term-care beds and community support for patients. As a result, paramedics are now spending their entire shifts waiting with patients in hospital parking lots because there are no beds available inside, where sometimes about 15% of the beds are occupied by patients who have no community support or long-term-care bed to go to.

This government claims to have made progress in health care, but I ask the government: How, then, is it possible that the residents of Waterloo region are spending up to eight hours in the back of an ambulance because there are no beds available? According to John Prno, Waterloo region's emergency services director, the problem stems directly from a stressed health care—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: After the worst recession since the Great Depression, Ontario is turning the corner and our province is emerging as a global economic leader. But the McGuinty government recognizes that in an ever more competitive world market, it's the quality of our workforce that will really make the difference.

In the past seven years, we've made many important investments in training and education, and sometimes the best education comes with on-the-job experience. That's why I was so pleased yesterday to see our government announce that we will help more than 100,000 Ontario students get summer jobs. We've committed an additional \$22.5 million, which will provide students with job search and self-marketing services, provide eligible employers with a \$2-per-hour incentive to hire summer students, and provide opportunities for young people to work in the Ontario public service.

The Ontario Rangers program places 17-year-olds in this province's magnificent wilderness to improve our parks and monitor at-risk species.

We have programs to help students start their own summer business, to provide First Nations and law students with work placements, and to provide employment to disadvantaged young Ontarians.

This government's investments will help students explore the workplace and their talents, improving their skills and earning money to continue their studies.

By helping young people find summer work, the McGuinty government is helping Ontario families today and, more importantly, building a better future and a better Ontario.

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POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I'm proud to rise and talk about the McGuinty government's strong commitment to post-secondary education in the province. This year's budget

will create tens of thousands of new spaces in colleges and universities across Ontario, so that there will be room for every qualified Ontario student to attend a post-secondary institution. With the new commitment, the McGuinty government will raise the number of Ontario students attending post-secondary institutions to 70%. Since we took office in 2003, 200,000 more students are learning in Ontario's colleges and universities. Our province's post-secondary attainment rate rose from 56% to 64%, higher than in any other OECD country.

Our government recognizes that education will be the key factor that determines which economies thrive in the highly-competitive post-recession world, and that to build a skilled workforce we have to ensure post-secondary education is available to all Ontarians. As Ontario's economy turns the corner, this kind of strategic investment is necessary to position Ontario as a global economic leader.

Together, we're building a stronger future for a stronger Ontario as our province turns the corner in its economic recovery. Together, we're helping families build a better future for their children.

HORIZON PLASTICS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Ontario's economy is turning the corner. The strong economic leadership of the McGuinty government has delivered real results to real Ontario families. Some 93% of the jobs lost during the recession have been recovered and Ontario businesses are growing.

Our government is helping companies like Horizon Plastics International, which produces advanced plastic products and transforms their good ideas into great jobs. This means up to 350 new jobs in Cobourg. Horizon Plastics, which develops and manufactures custom plastic products for industrial, environmental and consumer sectors around the world, is on the cutting edge in manufacturing. We are helping them commercialize new technologies to produce plastic using half the amount of raw material. This procedure uses less energy, less oil, gas, and water, while also creating less waste. The plastic produced is strong enough to be used in boats and RVs in place of plywood.

Cutting-edge companies like this attract jobs and investment in Ontario, allowing our province to move forward and compete in an increasingly competitive global economy. Supporting made-in-Ontario technologies like Horizon Plastics is part of our government's plan to create and support 10,000 new and exciting jobs for families and strengthen local economies. With investments like these, our government is committing to build a stronger future for a stronger Ontario.

HAMID GHASSEMI-SHALL

Mr. Michael Prue: On the evening of the 12th of April, a couple of days ago, I attended a meeting of Amnesty International at St. John's Norway Church. The community had gathered there to support Hamid

Ghassemi-Shall. He's a Canadian citizen and a resident of Beaches-East York. He has been detained in the notorious Evin prison in Tehran since May 2008. Prior to going to Iran to visit his elderly mother, he lived, as I said, in Beaches-East York with his wife Antonella. He is a Canadian citizen who is being held in solitary confinement for the past 18 months. He was seized by the Iranian authorities, along with his brother, who has died in prison in mysterious circumstances. He had a mock trial. He was convicted of espionage and has been sentenced to death. The evidence against him was an email which has now been proven to be false and fabricated.

Antonella, his wife, spoke with great courage and sadness. She and Amnesty International are asking for support. There is a website: freehamid.org. They're asking people to go to it, to get the information on what to do, and to contact federal MPs and others who may be able to put pressure on the Iranian government to free an innocent man.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I beg leave to present a Report on Statutes that Provide for Future Assembly Reviews from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I just have to say that the committee has done a complete review of other jurisdictions, and the report speaks for itself, so I move adoption of the report.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Balkissoon has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

PETITIONS

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France G  linas: I have this petition from the people of Sudbury:

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients...; and

"Whereas," since October 2009, "insured PET scans" are being performed "in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury

Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens” of northeastern Ontario.

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Sydney to bring it to the Clerk.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Frank Klees: “Petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

“Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

“Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen’s Park ... on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

“That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.”

As that particular private member’s bill was put forward by me, I’m pleased to endorse this and add my signature. I present it to Riley.

1320

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: « Attendu que la mission du commissaire aux services en français est de veiller à ce que la population reçoive en français des services de qualité du gouvernement de l’Ontario et de surveiller l’application de la Loi sur les services en français;

« Attendu que le commissaire a le mandat de mener des enquêtes indépendantes selon la Loi sur les services en français;

« Attendu que contrairement au vérificateur général, à l’ombudsman, au commissaire à l’environnement et au

commissaire à l’intégrité qui, eux, relèvent de l’Assemblée législative, le commissaire aux services en français relève de la ministre déléguée aux services en français;

Ils demandent à l’Assemblée de l’Ontario « de changer les pouvoirs du commissaire aux services en français afin qu’il relève directement de l’Assemblée législative. »

J’appuie cette pétition et je vais demander à Logan de l’amener à la table des greffiers.

MATTHEWS HOUSE HOSPICE

Mr. Jim Wilson: A petition to address funding inequity for Matthews House Hospice:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the number of clients served by Matthews House has doubled in less than three years, while funding provided by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care through the Central LHIN remains substantially unchanged; and

“Whereas Matthews House is the lowest-funded hospice in the Central LHIN and among the lowest-funded in the province, serving as many clients or more than others receiving substantially more money; and

“Whereas in February 2010, Matthews House was promised a short-term and a long-term solution to its underfunding by the Central LHIN and that the long-term solution has not materialized; and

“Whereas, in January, Matthews House was told by the Central LHIN that any adjustment would have to come from the ministry, while two months later the ministry informed Matthews House that it would have to work with the Central LHIN to solve its funding issues;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That Premier McGuinty instruct the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to appoint someone with authority to meet with the board representatives of Matthews House Hospice to sort out how they can get a just resolution for the people of south Simcoe needing hospice care, a resolution that ensures that their promise of a long-term solution is kept, giving them base funding equal to that of other hospices in Central LHIN.”

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Bob Delaney: It’s a pleasure to stand and read this petition that has been given to me by my seatmate, the hard-working member for Niagara Falls. It’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and reads as follows:

“We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children’s Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children’s relationships with their parents and grandparents, as requested in Bill 33, put forward by MPP Kim Craitor.

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents"—and there are a number of other, very technical amendments.

It concludes:

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

It contains the signatures of a number of individuals from Tilbury, Chatham, Blenheim and Stoney Point. I'm pleased to affix my signature and give this to page Cherechi to carry.

RURAL SCHOOLS

Mr. Jim Wilson: A petition to save Duntroon Central Public School and all of the rural schools in Clearview township:

"Whereas Duntroon Central Public School is an important part of Clearview township and the surrounding area; and

"Whereas Duntroon Central Public School is widely recognized for its high educational standards and intimate learning experience; and

"Whereas the frameworks of rural schools are different from urban schools and therefore deserve to be governed by a separate rural school policy; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised during the 2007 election that he would keep rural schools open when he declared that, 'Rural schools help keep communities strong, which is why we're not only committed to keeping them open—but strengthening them'; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty found \$12 million to keep school swimming pools open in Toronto but hasn't found any money to keep rural schools open in Simcoe-Grey;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Education support the citizens of Clearview township and suspend the Simcoe County District School Board ARC 2010:01 until the province develops a rural school policy that recognizes the value of schools in the rural communities of Ontario."

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario's inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

"Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 126, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2010, to prohibit the desecration of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

I agree with this petition, shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

WIRELESS PHONE, SMART PHONE AND DATA SERVICE TRANSPARENCY ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE DES SERVICES DE TÉLÉPHONE MOBILE, DE TÉLÉPHONE INTELLIGENT ET DE DONNÉES

Mr. Oraziotti moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 133, An Act to provide transparency and protection for consumers of wireless telephone services, smart phone services and data services in Ontario / Projet de loi 133, Loi prévoyant la transparence des services de téléphone mobile, de téléphone intelligent et de données et la protection des consommateurs de tels services en Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. David Oraziotti: I'm certainly pleased to be here today, and I'm excited to talk about this particular proposed piece of legislation. As members of the House are aware, back on November 16, 2010, this bill carried on first reading, and I certainly appreciate the support of the House on that.

A number of my colleagues will be speaking to this bill. The member from Brampton West, the member from Eglinton-Lawrence and the member from Oak Ridges-Markham will all be speaking in support of Bill 133 today.

I want to take a little bit of time to talk about some of the aspects in this legislation: why I believe it's important that we move forward with Bill 133 and the benefits to Ontarians.

Quite frankly, there is a vacuum when it comes to protection for consumers around the use of cellphones, smart phones and data devices in the province of Ontario. This bill will provide relief for consumers from unfair practices. The bill will address issues around optional and mandatory services in service agreement contracts and deal with the disclosure of fees, the issue around automatic renewal and the excessive cancellation fees that are charged to consumers who use these devices in the province of Ontario.

I think it's important to remember that 77% of people in Ontario use cellphones, smart phones or these data

service devices. For many people in this province it has become a necessity, an essential part of life; a device and a piece of equipment that they can't do without. The reality, as well, is that there's a real lack of competition. There's a lack of competition in this sector, and it is a sector that is, quite frankly, calling out for government regulation and protection for consumers.

The big three companies—Bell, Telus and Rogers—still dominate the market: 97% of the market share. There are not the opportunities that exist in other jurisdictions for consumers to selectively choose plans that are more fair and more transparent for consumers. That's really the purpose for this particular piece of legislation.

We've been contacted, and I've been contacted, by hundreds of individuals around the province on this issue. I know other members of the Legislature have as well. Bill 133 is at second reading today, and I want to encourage all members of the Legislature to support this bill, because this is an important piece of legislation.

Let's talk a little bit about some of the aspects of the bill. First of all, we want to see that the contracts clearly disclose all optional and mandatory services in these agreements. I'm not sure if you've read your contract and you know exactly what's in it, but surveys out there in this country say that 40% to 50% of people who sign these contracts have no idea what's in their contract. Now, we can blame the consumer and we can say, "It's your obligation. You should know what you're signing, of course." That's perhaps more easy and convenient. The reality is that when 40% to 50% of people in Ontario don't understand their contract, we've got a problem, and the problem is that the contracts are not as transparent as they need to be. They're not written in plain language for the average consumer to understand and to be aware of. That's really presenting problems in the sector.

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The transparency aspect is important because it helps to reduce bill shock, and it helps to ensure that the consumer understands what it is they're signing up for and how much that service will actually cost. Given the subsidized upgrades and subsidized equipment and some of the free and promotional initiatives that the corporations are putting forward to get consumers to purchase their particular package, consumers aren't really sure when the true bill comes in what it's going to be.

The companies, I think, in fairness to consumers, need to find a way in the contract—the legislation today proposes that the greater transparency and greater disclosure of optional and mandatory fees will do that, so the consumer will have a true picture of what those costs will really be once all of the gimmicks and promotional services have elapsed, to reduce that bill shock. I think that's really important.

Another aspect of the legislation is to ensure that the cancellation fees to consumers are reflective of the cost of the service and the cost of the equipment. This bill is similar to legislation that was passed in Quebec in July 2010. Quebec, as you know, is the only jurisdiction in this country that has any type of consumer protection

legislation for cellphones and smart phone devices. The Quebec bill, in similarity, does address automatic renewal, cancellation fees and some greater transparency issues. It's a bit more narrow in focus. This bill would make Ontario have the most comprehensive protection for consumers in the country, and that's why we think it's a good bill.

The cancellation issue around service contracts—let's face it; we all know that there is a subsidy that's taking place around the access to equipment. If you walk into a store, one of the retail or carrier stores, and you purchase a BlackBerry or smart phone and it's at a cost of \$99, let's say, and it's really a \$500 piece of equipment, no one would suggest that two months into the three-year contract you can cancel the contract and walk away with the equipment and that's it. The reality is that, as a consumer, you have a piece of equipment now and you need to pay for the full cost of that equipment. But beyond that, the excessive penalties to consumers, month after month after month, to cancel that contract or get out of that contract are absolutely ridiculous. This is the gouging that's going on in the sector of consumers. Quite frankly, it's just unreasonable.

In your own home, if you want to cancel your cable television, you call up and 30 days later it's cancelled. If you want to cancel any other service in your residence, there is not a perpetual cancellation fee that goes on for months and months and months. This is an important issue, and there's a formula we're proposing in the bill that would cap the cancellation fees. The consumer would pay for the cost of the equipment—30 days' notice—and they're out of the contract.

Issues around automatic renewal: This is a problem as well. You sign up for a three-year contract, you make a slight change to your plan, you're two months away from ending your contract, and guess what? You're renewed for three more years. Right? We have heard the stories on and on and on. Someone's in a family plan, they add one of their children, they're three months away from the end of their three-year deal and they're now into another three-year deal. We need to have the express consent of the consumer for the plan to be renewed for a like term.

Now, if a consumer comes in and obviously wants to take advantage of some kind of reduced or subsidized upgrade on a piece of equipment, that's a very different matter. They have the ability to do that, and they acknowledge that they're signing on for a like term to be able to access that equipment, and they do that with full knowledge.

At the end of the three-year deal or the two-year deal that they've signed, we're proposing that all of the contracts revert to a month-to-month pay, which will allow the consumers, obviously, to remove themselves from the plan should they see fit. So we think that's very important.

Another aspect of the bill: notification of usage limits when an individual is heading over their limit. They've done this in the States. The FCC has indicated that they want to see carriers notify individuals when they're

bumping up against their limit—80% or 90% of their usage—so that they know they may incur additional charges.

I'm aware that some of the carriers will tell you that you're in another jurisdiction and you get a message that says your roaming charges are this or that, and that's great. So there is a little bit of progress being made; not a lot; we've got a long way to go.

Elimination of the activation dates and expiry dates on prepaid cards: This is really important. This is just like gift cards. We've done it here in Ontario. You pay money for a particular service, to purchase something, and that card doesn't simply expire. In the phone industry, it does. You get so many days to activate it and you have to use it within so many days or it's gone. You've paid for the service; you should have the right to use the service. We've proposed some changes there as well.

There's also greater transparency in advertising: It's not a \$19.99 phone and it's not a \$29.99 phone. Is it a \$600 phone? Is it a \$400 phone? The largest all-in price should be the most prominent price when we're talking about advertising. It just creates greater transparency for the consumer, it avoids the bill shock, and it avoids things like Tom Harrington having a show on CBC Marketplace: Canada's Worst Cellphone Bill. The show took off, and he did a sequel to Canada's Worst Cellphone Bill. The horror stories in this sector go on and on.

Unlocking the device: This is also very important. Consumers who pay for the equipment and complete their contract should have use of the equipment. Some companies are now saying, "Well, we'll unlock it, but it's another \$50 charge." It seems a bit unreasonable, given that they've already paid for that equipment.

Today in the *National Post* there was an article around Bill 133. Bernard Lord, the chief of the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association, says, "We don't think legislation like this is needed to satisfy customers and meet their demands." Well, you know what? I think he's dead wrong. We need legislation in this sector. There is a vacuum at the federal level, and, so we're all clear, contracts signed in the province of Ontario are under the purview of the Ontario government and the jurisdiction of this province. Members of this Legislature have the ability to support consumers by protecting them from unfair practices.

Michael Janigan, general counsel for the Public Interest Advocacy Centre in Ottawa, says, "The question is whether there should be measures put in place across the board for wireless.... I think the legislation is still necessary." He said that today in the *National Post*.

This is an important issue for consumers. We all know consumers are being affected by many challenges out there: gas prices, food prices, you name it. There is a vacuum in this sector that is calling out for government support and regulation for consumers to level the playing field. There's not the competition out there right now so that consumers can get a fair price, and we need changes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 133, the Wireless Phone, Smart Phone and Data Service Transparency Act.

The member for Sault Ste. Marie has introduced an interesting bill in this House which deals with a very important yet complicated—and, I might add, disputed—subject. If this bill passes second reading today, we will need committee hearings to hear from consumer groups on the benefits of this bill. As well, we need to hear from the industry whether this bill would help or hinder the growth of a strong telecommunications industry in Ontario. Therefore, I will be supporting this bill at second reading, because I want to find out more about what it means for consumers and for the industry.

When we look at this issue, there are two clear principles we need to start with. First, we must strongly support consumer protection with clear and transparent rules dealing with wireless phone contracts. Second, we should strongly support a completely free and open market for wireless services, allowing individuals to make their own choices in a competitive marketplace that keeps prices low.

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As I see it, the key issues surrounding this bill fall into three areas: The first is cost, for which the evidence is in dispute; the second is contract provisions; and the third is a dispute between large wireless companies and new entrants to the market. The newer companies believe they are disadvantaged due to the contract provisions that exclude them from the market; for example, high cancellation fees.

When considering cost, the proposer of this bill said in a media release, "Ontarians pay one of the highest rates in the world for cellphone services, and this is a pocket book issue consumers want addressed. This bill is about fairness for consumers and is aimed at reducing costs, as well as making fees, billing rates and advertising more transparent."

The *Globe and Mail*, in its November 19 edition of last year, said, "Among 11 countries, Canadians are paying the highest minimum rates for postpaid cellphone service—\$67.50 per month, according to a recent survey by the New America Foundation. That compares to \$59.99 per month in the US and \$32.40 in the United Kingdom."

In a letter to MPPs on March 7, Telus quoted a study saying that, "Canada's wireless rates of 11 cents per minute were the fourth lowest in the G8. In Australia, which faces similar challenges to Canada in terms of an enormous country with a small population base, consumers pay 12 cents a minute, more than in Canada."

So cost is an issue that is in dispute. I think we need to hear more in public hearings on this bill. We need evidence to know any effects of cost.

With regard to contract provision, I have similar concerns. We need to ensure that contracts are fair to consumers without damaging the industry's ability to succeed. Another good reason for public hearings: to gather evidence.

I would like to read into the record the position of a couple of the stakeholders on this bill. The first one that I will quote from is the Consumers Council of Canada.

"The Consumers Council of Canada previously welcomed the introduction of Bill 133, 'Wireless Phone, Smart Phone and Data Service Transparency Act, 2010,' a private member's bill, in the Ontario Legislature. At last report, that bill was expected to receive second reading later this month, likely with all-party support. The bill would then head to committee, where consumers concerned about wireless service contracts in Ontario may wish to direct their concerns and attention.

"The bill proposes greater protections for consumers of wireless phone, smart phone and data services. The legislation would require clear disclosure of all optional and mandatory services, including the disclosure of 'hidden fees' and contract cancellation penalties. The legislation would also limit contract termination fees, among other provisions.

"Contracts for cellular voice and data services and equipment rate as top-10 sources of consumer complaints in Ontario," said Consumers Council of Canada president Don Mercer." And he goes on: "Many consumers feel their rights are unfairly limited and find it hard to understand their responsibilities under these agreements. Quebec has exercised its authority for contracts in this area. Now this bill in Ontario proposes action as well. Provinces across Canada should take responsibility and prompt action, and ultimately work toward a nationally harmonized approach that recognizes today's consumers are highly mobile. The Consumers Council of Canada encourages members of the Ontario Legislature to seriously engage this bill as a practical measure."

"The council has made input, as well, to the process in Manitoba considering contract reform relevant to wireless service."

The second group that we heard from was the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association. They provide a different slant and insight. They write: "It appears that many items in the bill are redundant. Much of what is contained in Bill 133 is already common practice by wireless carriers. For example, many wireless service providers already provide tools for customers to monitor their usage (i.e. online, through text alerts, etc.).

"The carrier members of the" Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association "are already bound to a code of conduct that addresses many of the issues outlined in the bill (i.e. full disclosure of all prices and terms and conditions of service, including any early termination fees; provide documents, including service agreements, contracts and invoices that are clear and readable; ensuring that advertising is clear; provisions for any changes to contract terms, and how carriers will respond).

"Wireless service providers do not automatically renew contracts without the customer's consent, so we are unsure why this is even mentioned in the bill.

"Canada already has a national agency to deal with telecommunications complaints (CCTS), and in addition, the CCTS uses the code of conduct to ensure that wireless carriers are in compliance.

"As well, the industry is already subject to strong federal oversight by the CRTC, Industry Canada and the Competition Bureau. We would not want to see Ontario wireless customers disadvantaged compared to residents of other provinces through the addition of extensive government bureaucracy that could possibly interfere with the price, choice and level of services in Ontario."

On the issue of prepaid cards: "Prepaid wireless service cards are not gift cards, like people buy for Starbucks or Chapters. They do not have 'expiry dates.' Once purchased, they can be activated at any time in the future.

"Consumers are not purchasing the card, per se; they are purchasing access to a wireless network. The card simply contains a PIN to access the network—the PIN could be written on a Post-it note and it would amount to the same thing.

"When signing up for a prepaid plan, the consumer is purchasing access to wireless service for a certain period of time or a certain number of minutes, whichever comes first. The consumer is being charged for both time and usage.... Even if a customer does not use all the minutes, they have had access to the network for the period of time they agreed to....

"Unlocking handsets: It is not illegal to unlock a cellphone in Canada. Some carriers already offer unlocking services; some carriers will activate unlocked phones on their networks, but in most cases, they cannot guarantee quality of service or honour device warranties that were not optimized for their network. Carriers cannot guarantee that handsets they have not tested will work on their networks."

Finally, on the issue of jurisdiction: The Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association "maintains that the wireless industry in Canada is under sole federal jurisdiction.

"Some provinces have claimed they can regulate federally licensed wireless companies, because they are regulating contracts signed in that province....

"The business model for prepaid services is based on both time and usage. Requiring carriers to sell prepaid access on the basis of usage alone would be a fundamental change to the prepaid business model in Ontario.

"Moreover, there aren't any actual contracts to sign for prepaid wireless service, so provincial jurisdiction over contracts would likely not apply anyhow."

From this description, it is very clear, I think, for all of us to see that stakeholders are divided in their opinions on this bill. If the government allows it to move forward to committee hearings, we can find out the views of all interested parties and gather evidence to make any necessary amendments.

We all want to do what is best for consumers, but we must make sure that this bill is the best option. We cannot damage the ability of our wireless industry to compete. If we harm the industry, it will only harm consumers in the end.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

1350

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm pleased to participate in this debate on behalf of New Democrats. I suspect I'll be joined by my colleague from Beaches–East York in a few minutes.

We're going to support the legislation. It's important for this bill to go to committee, if only for the delightful prospect of having executives from Telus, BCE and Rogers at the receiving end of some very pointed questioning that I'm sure will come from all three caucuses.

Look, this industry is amongst the foulest of industries in North America. They've made their bed—I shouldn't use that metaphor or analogy; I'll use the biblical one. If you sleep with dogs, you get fleas. They have been so abusive and disdainful of their customers.

You see, they would argue that they have competition, and of course they would argue, like so many people in this chamber would, that the market will control itself. Even the sponsor of the bill, who I trust doesn't self-identify as some sort of flaming socialist, acknowledges that the market fails when it comes to these operators. And our federal regulatory body fails too. Talk about gutless wonders. Talk about thoroughly ineffective at protecting consumers. But it has been, like most regulatory bodies, thoroughly co-opted by the industry that it purports to regulate. That's a trend. It's a historical trend.

I listened to the sponsor of the bill, and he made reference—I suspect offhand—that if you want to cancel your cable, you just call in and it's cancelled. Well, he obviously hasn't called a cable provider lately. It's nowhere near as simple as that. You try calling Bell, and it's not as simple as dialling them up—ring, ring, ring—and somebody answers, “Yes, sir. Can I help you?” And you say, “Cancel the ...”—oh, no. First, you've got to wait and wait and wait, and then you've got to jump through hoops. You've got to give them your great-grandmother's middle name, and then you get hung up on—right?—because some dough head is bored or their break time has come. I don't begrudge the hard work that call centre people do, because most call centres are now very high-tech and computerized, and these people don't get very many breaks.

Mr. Mike Colle: They're all in India.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm getting there, Mike, I'm getting there, let me tell you.

These people are inundated with calls. They aren't given any respite whatsoever.

But I want to give you two tips. If you call Bell and you get Emily—that's one person who is thoroughly distasteful and unlikeable—all you start doing is cursing like a teamster and the application, the computer, is programmed to switch you to a live person.

So you can vent your anger. You can experiment with new words that you may have heard somewhere or read but never had the courage to use, because you're doing it privately; you're only talking to a computer. If you curse out Emily, you will get transferred to a live person. Try it tonight; it works. I won't begin to list the types of curses, foul language and obscenities that will do it, but you can

be as extreme as you want. Don't be too subtle, because I think Emily has become a little seasoned.

The other trick is, if you're calling Bell Canada and you want the call centre in Canada, ask for the French option. Do you want English or French? Pick French, because that's based in Montreal. All the call centre employees of course can speak very good English. They're Québécois. They're bilingual. They also speak very good French. But that way, you get a call centre in Canada that's far more likely—they have a closer association with the Canadian operation. That's one of the things that rots my socks. I mean, Bell Canada; you assume it's Canadian, BCE.

How many times have you called Bell, and you're having a conversation—it's the middle of winter here—and you say, “By the way, what's the weather like there?” “Oh, it's 94 degrees.” Look, let's be fair. I don't begrudge people in other parts of the world having call centre jobs. But I come from a community that has, as its last big employer, a call centre, Canadian Tire Acceptance, and it is shutting down parts of its operation. We've seen call centre jobs flee Ontario and go to Halifax—Nova Scotia was going to be the new destination for call centre jobs—and now of course they're largely offshore.

The other thing: You say to this person who says it's 95 degrees, “Where are you?” He will identify a place somewhere on the opposite side of the globe. Fair enough. I'll say, “What's your name?” He'll say, “Lance” or “Justin”—some television celebrity. And I'll say, “Oh, don't. Stop that. Your name's not Lance.” “Yes, it is.” “Your name's not Lance.” “Yes, it is.” I'll say, “What's your real name? You're not?”—and then he'll tell me his real name. I'll say, “Good, that's better. My name's Peter. Now we can do business.”

Because of course, part of the fraud about these call centres by Canadian companies is that they train their call centre staff to give the impression that they're in Canada to avoid that tension that would normally be felt because we've lost so many call centre jobs. Now, I suspect that's part of the deal. When the minister today talked about Ontario's exports, one of our exports has been jobs. The Minister of Economic Development has got air miles coming out of her ears, based on the touring that she's done exporting our jobs.

We've got the Emily solution: Curse her out, and you'll get a live person. We've got the made-in-Canada solution: Go for the French option, and you'll get connected with Montreal.

Let's get back to the bill for a minute. I support the proposition in the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): That's a good idea.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Please, Speaker: It's one thing to be heckled by colleagues; it's another to be heckled by the Speaker. I know it's Thursday afternoon, but come on now.

What the bill speaks to in many respects, however sadly and regrettably, is an absolute absence of consumer protection in this province. It's no discredit to the minis-

ter or his predecessor or her predecessor. That ministry has been gutted, the Ministry of Consumer Services, for a good chunk of time. Talk about call centres: Most of that ministry consists of call centres where you have to press particular numbers, and you have a heck of a time getting live bodies answering the phone to respond to your concerns.

This bill, like the Consumer Protection Act, has no real enforcement. There are no enforcement provisions. The Consumer Protection Act: What it does is it requires you to sue, to litigate, just as this bill does. There is nothing in the consumer protection regime here in the province of Ontario that gives you access to an investigator who will investigate a matter; who will perhaps try to mediate a resolution between the aggrieved party and the company—what a novel idea—in an ombudsman sort of style, or at the end of the day, prosecute on behalf of the ripped-off citizen.

Regrettably, because the sponsor's bill here today has to fit into that current regime, this bill still doesn't provide any investigative authority, nor does it provide any advocacy on behalf of the aggrieved party. It simply gives you, or you, or you law to take to a court: the Superior Court of Justice under the Consumer Protection Act, and reference is made to part IX. That's regrettable, but that's the nature of what's happened to consumer protection here in the province of Ontario.

These companies, BCE and Rogers, as I say, insist that they have market competition. But in effect, they have quite a monopoly because one's pricing is very similar to the other's. If you leave one and go to the other, it's six of one and half a dozen of the other. If you get roughed up and punched out by supplier A, you're going to get roughed up and kicked around by supplier B. They know there's a limited number of them; there's not a huge number of them. It's not a big marketplace. It's not a shopping plaza; it's a little boutique store. So I appreciate the effort here, but the real goal should be for the federal regulator to clean this whole operation up.

One final comment, because I have to go to committee, is that the bill, thankfully, requires what is said to be plain language that is clear and concise in the contracts, in the information and agreement. We agree wholeheartedly with that. One only wishes that plain language would be used in the drafting of bills. Think about it: What's good for the goose should be good for the gander. Because you read this bill, and it's far from plain language—and that's not the fault of the sponsor, because he doesn't sit down. He gives directions and relies upon others.

Just a little editing commentary: In section 3 of the bill, "A future performance agreement to which this act applies shall be expressed in plain language that is clear and concise," "plain" means "clear." See what I mean? You've got excess verbiage here.

If you would, at some time, when this bill gets to committee: put "in plain language that is concise." You don't have to say "clear," because "plain" means "clear," and "concise" means "more pithy," as compared to "clear." "Concise" is good but delete "clear," please.

I'll yield the floor. I know my colleague will want to take up the brief seconds remaining.

1400

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: We could go on, each one of us, for about an hour on this bill. The bill—

Mr. Peter Kormos: On Rogers alone.

Mr. Mike Colle: On Rogers alone? On my cable bill alone.

I want to thank the member for Sault Ste. Marie for bringing forward this bill, which affects so many Ontarians: 77% of Ontarians have some kind of digital device, a cellphone, so it's crucial.

I think that what he's trying to say here is that we need to have some transparency in these contracts, we need to have some fairness for the consumer and we need to have some recourse to dealing with issues that arise in these contracts.

I see that all of the young people are leaving, and I wonder how many of them have cellphones. I wonder if they've read the contract and if we've read the contract. It's just amazing: You need a Bay Street lawyer to explain the contract. If you go home tonight, look at that contract. It is impossible for a layperson to understand, never mind the intent of the contract, but the fine print in the contract.

He's trying to put some very important protective initiatives in this legislation which I think will benefit the consumer. I want to commend him for doing that because, as you know, this is an area that it is essential now to have a cellphone. It's essential; it's no longer an add-on. If you look at the amount of money that is spent, it is a multi-billion-dollar industry. And the industry will thrive, and it is thriving, but as the industry thrives, there have to be some safeguards for the consumer. I totally support that initiative.

There are just so many potential areas. Again, the loss leaders—you see them all the time. They say, "For \$99 for three years"—there are so many inducements for these contracts to be signed with these providers that people are hooked by the inducement. Then when you get into it, you find out that there are all of these hidden charges that come as a huge surprise.

The usage of the phones is another mystery area. The roaming charge issue is another incredible hit on the pocketbook. You've got a lot of teenagers whose parents buy the phones for them, and then the teenagers are using them. The bill comes in—wow, talk about a surprise. There are many surprises that need to be contained, and I think this bill does that.

The member from Welland talked about one of the things you can do. If you ever have trouble with your phone company, your cable company, you just tell them you want to talk to the customer retention branch. They have a branch for that. If you ask for a reduced rate or say that you want to cancel, they don't talk to you, but if, all of a sudden, you say, "Listen, can I talk to the customer retention person?", all of a sudden you get a significant discount, because there's that one branch just to

basically keep you with that company. That's one little trick that some of the consumer groups have talked about: the customer retention branch. One day, we should take on the cable monopolies.

I hope the other new thing that's coming about is the thing about coupons. This is another amazing area. It's all over the Internet now. You buy these coupons to get something, and the coupons say \$100 off. Then you go to the store, and you find, "Well, we're out of the product that you got the coupons for." "When will the product be in?" "Well, maybe next month, or six months from now. We don't know." But you've already paid them up front for that coupon. That's another area we should look at. I don't know if the phone companies do that. The coupon is another interesting area of the marketing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I'll just add my comments. Certainly, I'll be supporting this bill, and for the main reason that I would like nothing better than for representatives from Rogers, from Bell and from Telus to come before the standing committee so that we, as members, can ask them some very pointed questions.

I will add just simply my comments that whether it's myself or members of my family or constituents, we are frustrated to no end at the ironclad contracts and the disregard for customer service by these companies.

It was mentioned before that while we have so-called competition, we really have a monopoly of three companies that are holding customers, I would say, hostage, because we have no alternatives. So I commend the member for bringing this forward. I think we need a fulsome discussion around this entire industry.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: As my colleague from Welland has already stated, New Democrats will be supporting this bill. We are supporting the bill, in part, because we want to hear from some of the executives, as has been said again and again, but in supporting this bill, we're hoping against hope that the government will beef up consumer protection. We do note that the bill has no enforcement arm, and for it to work effectively, there's going to have to be one.

Perhaps, in the discussion of this bill, government members will come to understand that we need to bring consumer protection back to Ontario. Every single MPP in this House probably gets the same letters and phone calls that I do from people who were ripped off by door-to-door salesmen selling energy products and are trying to get out of it, people who have shoddy deals but who have signed a contract for which they have to hire a lawyer or other professional to get out of it, at more cost than what the product is worth, so it never happens. And they sign contracts, most often, that they don't understand at all.

We are waiting for the day when this government gives some power, authority and money to the Minister of Consumer Services, because with this bill, it just might happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: It's a pleasure to speak in support of Bill 133, the Wireless Phone, Smart Phone and Data Service Transparency Act.

I became interested in this piece of proposed legislation when a well-known radio host in the South Asian community, Rajinder Saini from Parvasi Radio, discussed this bill on his daily radio show. Rajinder told me after this show that he received hundreds of calls from listeners about the problems that they were having.

I, myself, get people complaining. There isn't a day that goes by when I go in and my staff, who speak some South Asian languages that are representative of the constituents that I represent in Brampton West, are not trying to resolve the problems that they are having with their cellphone bills as a result of not knowing some of the fees that they have to pay.

As of late, when I listen to some of the South Asian radio programs, I often hear these enticing offers for cellphones, to the effect of \$25-a-month unlimited calling, free phones and free first month's bill. That really makes me suspicious about the product that they're offering, because they don't obviously state the whole contract or the whole terms of the contract.

Representing a riding where the majority of the residents, my constituents, are new immigrants who have language barriers—some of them can speak English, and some not very well, let alone be able to understand the tough technical language which is stated in some of these phone contracts. As a matter of fact, I myself have problems understanding some of the terms because of the language that is used. For that reason, I think this bill is warranted.

Bill 133, the Wireless Phone, Smart Phone and Data Service Transparency Act, proposes a number of regulatory changes that would better serve to protect consumers of wireless phone, smart phone and data services by requiring that wireless service providers conduct themselves in a manner that is more fair and transparent. This legislation would put an end to unfair practices on the part of the wireless service providers by requiring that companies be more clear in the disclosure of service fees, including the disclosure of hidden fees and contract cancellation penalties.

1410

Contract cancellation is a big issue when it comes to people wanting to change providers. As the member from Sault Ste. Marie mentioned, people do get out of the contracts but they're having to pay the cancellation fee, again, over and over, month after month after month, which I think is very unfair.

The reaction to this bill has been very positive. I can tell you, when I am walking in Shoppers World mall in Brampton West, I often get people coming up to me and saying, "Thanks for bringing up this piece of legislation, because we had such-and-such problem." I hear this over and over again, for which reason I think this type of legislation is needed.

As a matter of fact, there have been several consumer advocacy groups who have lent their support to this proposed legislation. I just want to share with you some of the comments they've made. Mel Fruitman, who is the VP of the Consumers' Association of Canada, says that for a long time Canadian consumers have "been victims of the nefarious marketing practices of the wireless telephone companies" and that this protection for consumers is necessary and long overdue. They can see no reason why this act would not receive all-party support and quickly be passed. Obviously, the official opposition and the third party have committed their support.

I just want to mention one other thing. The cellphone service issue was the number one complaint received by the ministry and by the Better Business Bureau. That's further evidence that this is a big problem, and I hope that we can all support this bill this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Certainly it's a pleasure to rise in support of Bill 133, An Act to provide transparency and protection for consumers of wireless telephone services, smart phone services and data services in Ontario.

The member for Sault Ste. Marie, I think, is becoming well known for his very-well-thought-out private members' bills. He has introduced a number since I have come to this House, and think I've been able to speak in support of each of them.

Clearly, what he wants to do is ensure that disclosure provisions in contracts are clear and that people understand what they are signing up for. How could anyone object to this type of approach? There are a couple of specific areas that have come to my attention that I wanted to share some examples of.

We've heard about teenagers perhaps using cellphones a great deal and running up very large bills. Well, there certainly are some kids whose parents want them to have a cellphone for emergency purposes who are very conscientious, and they do obtain prepaid cards for wireless service.

On these cards, I certainly want to take issue with what the member for York-Simcoe said. They do have an activation date, and once that card is activated, there is a specific period of time within which you must use that card. You can very often end up with minutes left on the card that are unused. So clearly, people are paying for a service that they have not received because many kids do simply use those phones for emergency provisions.

The cancellation fee is one that, certainly in our family, we really hadn't looked into properly. My father was in his mid-80s, and we decided that he needed a cellphone. He liked to go out for long walks, he was still driving his car, and we felt he needed a cellphone available to him. A contract was signed. Within probably just a matter of months, it became clear that he was no longer able to drive and that, no matter how many speed dials we put on the phone, he was really not able to use the phone. We ended up just letting the contract run for the remainder of the time because it was just too difficult to extract ourselves from that contract.

In the last few seconds, I would like to quote Mel Fruitman, vice-president of the Consumer' Association of Canada, who said about the industry that for a long time, consumers have "been victims of the nefarious marketing practices of the wireless telephone companies."

This bill is a very good step forward in examining those practices. I certainly urge all members of the House to support it so we can look at it in more detail in committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member Mr. Oraziotti has two minutes for his response.

Mr. David Oraziotti: I'm pleased to wrap up here. I wish I had more time on this bill, because there is so much more to talk about on this issue.

I want to thank my colleagues from Brampton West, Eglinton-Lawrence and Oak Ridges-Markham for their support, as well as the opposition members who are here today who spoke in favour of the bill: the member from York-Simcoe, the member from Newmarket-Aurora, the member from Welland and the member from Beaches-East York. Thank you for your support on this bill today. This is in the best interests of consumers.

Quite frankly, some of the companies out there are saying, "Do you know what? We're already doing some of these things." The reality is that if the bill passes, they shouldn't be concerned if they're already doing those things. I think the problem is that these things are not happening in the marketplace. Consumers are being stuck with massive bills, automatic renewal issues—a whole host of issues that we've already talked about.

The challenge is to bring some level of fairness to consumers in this sector. There is no competition in this sector, for all intents and purposes. Bernard Lord is pandering to these companies, and we need protection for consumers. The code of conduct that's in place seems to be a code of conduct that says, "Gouge the consumer." That's what the code of conduct seems to be, because consumers are really feeling the impact of these bills.

The vacuum at the federal level, when it comes to protection for consumers, is apparent, and I'm going to predict here today that if the federal government doesn't take a greater interest in this, you're going to see province after province implement consumer protection in this area. Quebec has already done that. I urge members to support Bill 133 so that we can have greater protection for consumers of cellphones.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for Mr. Oraziotti's ballot item has expired. We'll vote on it in approximately one hour.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LA SANTÉ MENTALE DES ENFANTS

Mr. Caplan moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 117, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Act to transfer the administration of certain children's mental health services to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / *Projet de loi 117, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille et la Loi sur le ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée afin de transférer l'administration de certains services de santé mentale pour les enfants au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. David Caplan: At the very outset, I want to especially take this opportunity to thank Christine Elliott, the member from Whitby-Oshawa, and France Gélinas, the member from Nickel Belt, who are co-sponsors of this bill.

Mental health and addictions are issues that touch all of us. Twenty years ago it was acknowledged that one in six Canadians would suffer from a mental illness or addiction in their lifetime. Ten years ago it was one in five. Today mental illness and addictions directly affect one in four of us. All in all, mental health and addictions cost Ontarians at least \$39 billion per year. That doesn't include the overwhelming emotional and societal costs that simply cannot be measured.

The preamble to this bill reads as follows: "The burden of mental illnesses and addictions on individuals, their families and society must be reduced. Ensuring that all residents of Ontario have timely and equitable access to an integrated and client-directed health system will help reduce this burden. Such a health system should include health promotion, prevention, early intervention, treatment and community support programming. It must be well coordinated and efficient and provide excellent services and programming. Giving the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care the responsibility of administering programs related to the treatment of children with mental disorders is a step toward achieving these goals."

1420

That's the preamble of this bill, and it's also the vision that an all-party committee of this Legislature came up with in their report, a select committee of the Legislature on mental health and addictions.

Currently, over half a million children and youth have a mental illness in the province of Ontario, and more than 300,000 of these young people have more than one disorder. Mental illness in children and youth can often be seen in their behaviours, such as bullying, stealing, lying, substance abuse, poor school performance, social withdrawal, isolation, involvement in criminal activity and frequent conflicts with family members and peers.

The auditor in his 2008 annual report noted that, in his words, there is "a patchwork of services for children with mental health needs, both in local communities and across the province." So I say that there is an urgent need to develop and implement a solid framework to improve coordination and integration across sectors, across regions and across ministries.

Now, as I noted earlier—and my co-sponsors were both members of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. They rightly note in their final report: "One of the main problems in Ontario's mental health and addictions system is that there is, in fact, no coherent system. Mental health and addictions services are funded or provided by at least 10 different ministries. Community care is delivered by 440 children's mental health agencies, 330 community mental health agencies, 150 substance abuse treatment agencies, and approximately 50 problem gambling centres."

Simply put, many people fall through the cracks or give up in frustration because of the complexity of the system that has developed over time. It's not by design; this is the way that it has evolved. But the clear fact is that youth between the ages of 16 and 24 are the biggest losers. They have the biggest detriment of this lack of coordination and integration between sectors and ministries. These youth are falling through the cracks in our mental health system as they move from the current children's mental health program to those delivered in the adult system.

This change was made some 30 years ago and I think for very good reasons and for very caring reasons. But I would say that after 30 years of evidence, clearly the status quo is not working and something needs to change, because the consequences have been quite telling.

Adolescents with mental health issues are at greater risk of dropping out of school, are ending up in our justice system or are simply not able to reach their full potential and become fully functioning adult members in society.

Mental illness is the strongest risk factor for youth suicides, which is the leading cause of non-accidental deaths among youth. It's no surprise that you begin to see that spike upward in youth suicides at the age of 15, at that time of important adolescent transition between a children's system and an adult system. There is a strong need for coordination and linkage between these systems in order to help and support these youth.

Early intervention and prevention are the key. It's imperative, as the select committee, the minister's advisory committee and so many other advocates have pointed out over the years. But over 70% of adults with mental illness report that the signs and the symptoms occurred during childhood and adolescence.

Unfortunately, the stigma and the discrimination associated with mental health prevent many families and many individuals from even reaching out for help. Thirty-eight per cent of Canadian adults would be embarrassed to admit to their children or teen that they had a mental illness such as anxiety or depression. You know, it takes a great deal of courage. I was thrilled to see that Canadian icons like Clara Hughes have come forward to talk about some of their battles, having overcome them to reach some of the great pinnacles of Olympic history.

But too often, these are hidden in the shadows. It's terribly disappointing that so many have difficulty coming forward to share the burden they have. In fact,

it's estimated that only one out of six children and youth who need mental health services ever receives professional help. Quite simply, mental health issues can be prevented, and treatment is effective; it works. Early identification, assessment and treatment lead to significant improvements in social and emotional development, academic progress, self-esteem and future quality of life.

This is very timely because in the recent budget, which just today passed second reading, there is renewed support for children's mental health programs, for that early intervention in schools and in communities. Giving the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care the overarching, umbrella responsibility for administering programs related to the treatment of mental health disorders will, in my opinion, create a seamless and fully integrated mental health system and a single entry point for youth, and will eliminate over time, I hope, the gap in service and programs for youth as they move from childhood to adolescence to adulthood.

I was thrilled to see that this was one of the key recommendations of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions in their final report, *Navigating the Journey to Wellness: The Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Ontarians*. In fact, the first recommendation was to create a coordinating body. They called it Mental Health and Addictions Ontario. The second—or (1) and (1)(a)—recommendation was this: that there be that overarching coordination, and that it be housed under the purview of the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

I want to congratulate each and every member of the select committee for the work that they undertook to produce such an extensive report, and for the insightful recommendations that were made to improve mental health and addictions services in Ontario.

Over the span of 18 months—and I think that's really important; for a year and a half—this legislative committee, the select committee, held over 30 days of public hearings from one end of the province to another, hearing testimonials from over 230 presenters and receiving more than 300 written submissions. It's truly a great testament to the work that can be done when members from all political parties come together and work together to tackle the important issues facing Ontarians. I'm delighted to see that a number of the members of that committee are here today to participate in today's debate, and I look forward to hearing the different perspectives that will be brought forward.

I recognize that any change which challenges the status quo will be difficult. I recognize that if we take that same kind of spirit of working together and that can-do attitude, these challenges can be easily overcome.

I've personally been touched in a very close way by mental health and addictions issues. I know that I'm not unique, because my neighbours in Don Valley East have come and told me their circumstances and asked for individual help and support, and I know that all members of the Legislature share in those kinds of experiences. Ontarians of all walks of life have similar stories to tell.

Individuals with mental illness are amongst the most vulnerable in our society. I firmly believe that the way we deal with this issue is in many ways a measure of ourselves as a compassionate society.

Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity here today to have second reading debate, and I look forward to hearing from all of my colleagues as it pertains to Bill 117.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

1430

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm very pleased to rise to contribute to the debate on Bill 117, the Children's Mental Health Act, 2010, and very happy to have the opportunity to co-sponsor the bill along with the member from Don Valley East and the member from Nickel Belt.

The PC caucus believes in the work of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions and in its recommendations. Accordingly, since the premise of the Children's Mental Health Act is consistent with recommendation 1 of the select committee, we are obviously supportive of this bill.

If passed, this legislation would be a huge step forward in overhauling our mental health and addictions system, which will be a source of relief for many Ontario individuals and families who have been impacted by mental health and addiction issues. As you will know, recommendation 1 of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions report proposed that children's mental health services be placed within the responsibility of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Under this recommendation, a new umbrella organization would be created, which was referred to by the member from Don Valley East, called Mental Health and Addictions Ontario. The responsibility for that agency would fall under the purview of the Ministry of Health.

Mental Health and Addictions Ontario would be responsible for the design, management and coordination of our mental health and addictions system, and for ensuring that programs and services are delivered in a consistent and comprehensive manner across the province of Ontario. Currently, the transition from children and youth to adult mental health services is quite fragmented and very difficult to navigate for health care consumers and their families. For individuals with mental illnesses and addictions, and the families who care for them, navigating the system causes frustration—we certainly heard that in our committee—and contributes to the direct stresses that they are already facing. Transitional-aged youth, children aged 16, 17 and 18, tend to fall between the cracks in our system. Once they're lost, it's very difficult for them to recover.

As members of the select committee, we heard firsthand about the lack of children's mental health programs and services and the difficulty in transitioning from children to adolescent to adult programs. During our consultations, Mr. Dan Hagler, who is the executive director of the Youthdale Treatment Centres, described the period from age 16 to 18 years as a "twilight zone" where

there's a scarce number of comprehensive integrated holistic treatments available. A seamless transition from child to adult mental health services would help vulnerable individuals in accessing the services they require and would equip the system to stop short changing the needs of transitional-aged youth.

Another issue we heard about repeatedly from individuals such as Angela Jacobs, who is an associate at the Mississauga Halton LHIN, is the fact that there are silos at every system level between mental health and addictions treatments in hospital and those that are available in the community. The committee actually was surprised by the fact that no one individual or organization seems to be charged with the responsibility of coordinating the various systems and making sure that they all connect. As a result, mental health and addictions treatment is a patchwork across the province, and the services that you are able to receive vary depending on where you live in the province.

During the select committee, we recognized that mental health services for children is an issue of particular importance because we are particularly concerned to hear about the increase in youth suicide: Each year, on average, 100 children and youth in Ontario will commit suicide. More of our children die from suicide than from cancer, heart disease, respiratory illness and diabetes combined. This is closely linked to the issue of mental health, given that mental illness is the strongest risk factor for suicide. Most children who suffer from depression have an underlying mental health disorder. Depression is a significant risk factor for suicide, especially among young girls. Youth may face many challenges, such as family and school pressures, major life changes, bullying and sexual orientation issues, that can act as a catalyst for mental illness. It is absolutely critical that when youth do face these critical pressures, they're able to cope and can rely on a system that is adequate, comprehensive and easy to access, regardless of where they live in the province of Ontario.

As vice-chair of the select committee and as co-sponsor of this legislation, I'm certainly hopeful that eventually all of the recommendations of this select committee will come to fruition. This bill will certainly help move the yardstick forward by consolidating children's and adults' mental health services under the purview and responsibility of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, at least with respect to the treatment options available under the Child and Family Services Act. We hope that will expand to include all children's mental health services.

I believe that if we do this, this will result in compassionate, effective and timely care for the many children and youth in our province who so desperately need our help. So I'm very grateful for the opportunity to contribute, and happy to co-sponsor this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

M^{me} France G  linas: It is also my pleasure to stand here today and add a few words in support of Bill 117,

which the member from Don Valley East, the member from Whitby-Oshawa and myself co-sponsored.

I think it speaks to the importance of the issue if you look at who is co-sponsoring. To say the least, when you read some of my quotes in Hansard, I have not always been very kind to the member from Don Valley East. When he held the portfolio of Minister of Health, if you look through Hansard then, you would think we disagreed on everything from home care to long-term care to northern and rural health to emergency care. You name it, I'm on record as speaking against the honourable member. Not my best moment, I guess.

But there is one thing that shines through this time: his commitment to mental health and addictions. This is something that I've always supported in what he has done. It was under the member's watch that the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions was created. It was an idea that had come from the member from Whitby-Oshawa, that she had presented, but it was acted upon. Resources were actually allocated, people gathered together and the select committee happened.

It's interesting to see—you cannot see, but I can tell you that the member from Oakville, the member from Scarborough-Rouge River, the member from Dufferin-Caledon, the member from Peterborough, the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, the member from Whitby-Oshawa, the member from Oak Ridges-Markham and the member from Guelph, we were all together on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. And although this is a Thursday afternoon, which tends to be quite quiet in this House, most of us are here today. We are here today because of the work that we've done for the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions and for the importance of mental health.

It was also under the member's watch that the advisory committee to the minister was formed. They also produced a report, which I would say, if you look at the path that the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions has given in our recommendations, the recommendations from the advisory committee that the member started certainly continue in that direction. I would say, with those two, plus the private member's bill that we are debating here today, the stars are finally aligned to shine a light on children's mental health and to move things forward.

Another achievement of the member was really in the summer of 2009. It was in the heat of the summer, where usually nothing happens except at the side of a pool or a lake or a camp. But it was in the heat of the summer, and the member was able to gather hundreds of people in downtown Toronto to talk about mental health and to talk about Every Door is the Right Door.

That was an achievement that we had never seen before, because to try to bring mental health into the spotlight, to try to give it the importance that it has for everyone in Ontario, is almost impossible. You talk about high-tech medical procedures—all of the media are on it. It makes the front page of all of the papers. You talk

about mental health and addiction—nobody listens. It seems like nobody cares. But the member was able to turn that around, and I would certainly commend him for what he has done and, hopefully, what we as a group will continue to do.

1440

We have talked about the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. I know I'm not allowed a prop, but I will read from it—*Navigating the Journey to Wellness: The Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Ontario*.

As soon as you open it, our very first recommendation has two parts. The first part talks about creating Mental Health and Addictions Ontario. We want to gather accountability, responsibility for best practices etc. under one roof so that those 10 ministries that are trying really hard to offer some kind of mental health or addictions program can finally be gathered up together. Somebody is held accountable. Best practices are developed, they're implemented, they're used: That was our first recommendation.

Our first recommendation continues, saying, "All mental health and addictions programs and services—for all regions of the province and for all ages, including children and youth—should be consolidated in the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care." The bill that we have here today, Bill 117, is trying to do this. It is trying to amend the Child and Family Services Act and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Act to transfer the administration of children's mental health services to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. I don't think all of the services would be transferred, but I would say the majority of them would be. It shows the member's commitment to mental health and to children's mental health and addictions.

As has been said before me, close to half a million children in Ontario are suffering from mental health and addiction issues, and the patchwork of services that exists is not meeting their needs.

I know there is a little bit of resistance out there toward this bill and toward this idea. I had been in health care for a very long time before I became a politician. I remember way back when children's mental health was under health, and at the time it was not well served. The types of treatment we were offering those kids, frankly, would not meet any criteria that we are presently using to help kids with mental health or addiction issues. So it was moved to what we now call the children and youth ministry. That ministry has changed names many, many times, but this is what we call it now.

I think it is time to bring it back under health. This philosophy that children with mental health issues are just acting out, that it is a behavioural problem, is completely wrong. Those children are ill. Just like everybody else who has a mental illness, they are ill and they need treatment to get better. Treating people falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health.

Of course, the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions has many other recommendations, 23 of them

altogether. We talk about the basket of services that is necessary in all parts of the province in order to start to make inroads. But at the core of it, what we call the integration of the mental health system must start at the top. I believe that it has the best chance of addressing the most serious problems affecting our current mental health and addictions system and of helping children the most. So it is a necessary step, although we all recognize that it is but one step. Many, many other ones will need to follow.

As was mentioned, we held 30 days of hearings during the 18 months that led us to the recommendations of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. We heard many, many stories, many of them having to do with children and how, in one way or another, the system failed them. The system failed them with catastrophic consequences on their lives and the people who cared for them and loved them.

I know that we've already talked about one of the most drastic consequences of mental illness that goes untreated; that is depression and suicide. You have to realize that healthy people don't commit suicide. People who commit suicide are sick. They needed help. Sometimes they've reached out for help but couldn't gain access to any, and we've heard many stories.

There was one story that I will remember forever from when I was working at the community health centre; we covered an area of my riding called Rayside-Balfour, which includes Azilda and Chelmsford. Five little girls made a pact to commit suicide. Out of the five, two of them died, and three of them are still here with us. That event changed that community forever. They were all from the same school. We dedicated a nurse to go into that school and to help each and every one of the children in that school to try to get through. But over and over again, we looked at how they had reached out for help, their families had reached out for help, and we had failed them. We know that we can do better.

Moving ahead with Bill 117, this co-sponsored bill, is one way to show that we want to make things better. I know we are in a recession. We are not asking for any type of money involvement. We're talking about putting the building blocks together so that we can do better. It starts by bringing children's mental health back where it belongs; that is, under the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

I thank the member for having brought that bill forward and asking us, myself and the member for Whitby-Oshawa, to co-sponsor it. It's an honour to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member from Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It is a pleasure to join the debate by rising and speaking to the co-sponsored private member's bill that we have before us today. All members in the House have played a major role in this issue, and I think they are to be applauded for their efforts, but especially those who have co-sponsored this bill: The member for Don Valley East brought the bill forward, co-sponsored by the member for Whitby-Oshawa and the member for Nickel Belt.

I think the member from Don Valley East made mental health and addictions a huge priority when he served as a member of cabinet. He brought together the Minister's Advisory Group on Mental Health and Addictions to advise him and those in his office. He co-hosted, as has been mentioned, a fantastic summit meeting that was held in Toronto, which drew, I think, over 1,000 participants in the middle of the summer. It was called Open Minds, Healthy Minds, and it was really to bring the issue to the forefront to allow those who had been frustrated by the inaction to date on some of these issues the avenue to express those frustrations, bring their concerns forward and deal with some members of this House who are prepared to act upon some of these recommendations. He's been a tremendous advocate for this issue, and that continues today.

I had the pleasure of serving on this committee, the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, as the Chair for 18 months, along with the co-sponsors of the bill, as I said, the members from Whitby—Oshawa and from Nickel Belt. Other members came from Peterborough, Guelph, Oak Ridges—Markham, Scarborough—Rouge River, Dufferin—Caledon and Lambton—Kent—Middlesex. I was really proud of the way the committee conducted itself on such a sensitive issue. I think because of that conduct, they came forward with a report that people from all sides of the House, from both sides of this issue—if there are sides on this issue—recognized as being what's best about politics, what politics was intended to do.

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We heard from people, as we travelled around the province, that the issue of mental health and addictions has been ignored at Queen's Park for far too long in the past, by all levels of government and by all parties.

We came up with a series of recommendations to establish a comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy in the province of Ontario, and I know when we came up with the recommendations, there were still some in the province who were sort of cynical as to whether they would amount to anything.

So I really want to thank as well, as I give these remarks today, Minister Broten, Minister Matthews and Minister Duncan for the effort that they put in to giving some tangible evidence of the government's willingness to act on these issues by including what they included in the previous budget, and that is between \$250 million and \$300 million over three years for children's mental health.

Now what we heard, and it has been noted as we travelled around the province—and this comes very early in the recommendations—is that there was a unanimous decision made by the committee that the current funding arrangement was not working. There was a sense, I think, that came from some of the people who appeared before the committee that adults in the mental health system were getting better treatment than children in the mental health system. This is something that I had heard in my own region for a number of years, and there was a sense that this needed to be looked at.

I think that any time you have the opportunity to raise an issue and to discuss the issue in an open way, only good things can come out of this. I think all members of the committee agreed that the status quo was simply not good enough, and I think there are already people who have taken sides on this issue without that conversation having taken place. I think it's very healthy that that conversation take place. It could be that, at the end of the day, once that conversation has taken place, there's a way that this system can work without taking these services out of children and youth services and moving them to health. I simply don't know. But what I do know is that there's an appetite in the province of Ontario to talk about this issue in an open way, to talk about this issue in a manner that allows all the facts to come out and allows us to move ahead and to do the right thing.

I'm starting to notice at many of the events that I've been asked to attend now that the issue comes up. Ordinary people on the street now are feeling more comfortable about talking about the issue. There is still a stigma attached to the issue—there's no doubt—but I think people now are starting to open up a little bit more, and they're prepared to talk about it. There are not too many people who haven't been touched, either in their own family, in their friends' families or co-workers, by this issue in some manner. In the past, I don't think they felt they had permission in a societal way to talk about it. Now I think that's starting to change.

In the fall, the government acted very quickly on the narcotics strategy act. As I said, we've seen some substantial progress in what was included in the budget this year, and it starts with children and youth. What I'm suggesting today is that I'm not sure, at the end of the day, that what's being put forward is actually what I would like to see happen in the province of Ontario, but I'm very sure that what I would like to see take place is that conversation that allows both sides of the issue to bring forward the best of both models of funding, and then we move forward from there on.

But I think that, before we take sides on this issue, we've got one thing to remember, and that is, this is about the kids. This is about the mental health and addictions issues that these kids are facing. I think if we put the kids first, we'll make the right decision. You can't make the right decision unless you have that conversation. That's why I'm supporting the bill today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the members for Don Valley East, Whitby—Oshawa and Nickel Belt and all those individuals who have worked so hard and who have demonstrated a genuine commitment to mental health.

Mental health has been an issue in this Legislature for as long as I can remember, since I arrived here, and it's a non-partisan issue. It's an issue where I do believe that all three parties sincerely want to improve the accessibility to the services and also the delivery of the services.

So I do believe that this amendment today, which is co-sponsored by all three parties, to transfer the admin-

istration of certain children's mental health services to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is a good one, because we have too many silos today. Hopefully this will enhance the ability to approach this issue and provide the necessary mental health and addiction services that are so desperately needed by our young people. I know this is also consistent with the select committee's final report. Again, that committee did a great job.

This bill is going to make what I believe will be a very quick and significant improvement to the delivery of services. It's going to provide a desperately needed overhaul of our system. It will streamline the delivery of services, and thereby will, as I said at the outset, provide greater access for our children and young people and also continuity of care. I believe this is necessary. We have a very fragmented system today. It results, as I say, in silos and discrepancies between ministries.

We know that those in particular who fall through the cracks and between the silos are the youth who are receiving mental health services when they reach the age of adulthood and have that transition. So I support this. I support the establishment of the central umbrella organization that would be responsible for the design, management and coordination of the mental health system. As I say, it would help us eliminate the fragmentation we have today. We need consolidation in order that we can ensure consistency and efficiency. We need to strive to end the complex system that exists for parents and families in our province.

I remember that one of the first issues I dealt with when elected as a member was the fact that I had several families who were desperately seeking services for their children. A few of them were addiction cases, and there was just nowhere for people to go. We need to create a system that is seamless, we need this transition from youth to adult mental health services and we need to make sure nobody is stuck in no man's land.

I support the bill and I'm glad that people have come together, because mental health is an important issue and we need to do all we can to make the lives and the experience of those who suffer from mental illness better than what is happening to them today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm delighted to stand up and participate in the debate on Bill 117, which was brought forward by the member from Don Valley East and co-sponsored by the members from Whitby-Oshawa and Nickel Belt.

I think this issue is important to all of us, and that's why I want to commend the member from Don Valley East. When he was Minister of Health, he formed a committee from both sides of the house to deal with this issue. It's an important issue, not just for us as a government but for all members of this House from the opposition and the third party and also all the people of Ontario. This issue has been neglected for many years, and it was about time to open it up and form a committee to go and talk to the stakeholders across the province of On-

tario and speak to experts who dealt with the issue for many years.

Certainly, before I got elected, I went to many different places in London, and they told us about how important it is to deal with mental health and addiction in the province of Ontario. How many people have been neglected in the system; how many people who are suffering from mental illness or addictions fill up the jails and are on the streets homeless and in trouble with the police?

There are many different elements to it, as the member from Don Valley East mentioned. If we deal with this in a professional manner, it will save us \$39 billion. The result of neglecting this issue will cost our society and our community a lot of good people and also almost \$39 billion. That's why this issue is being brought up again by the same member who was the Minister of Health and formed the committee to study it in depth and come back to the House to be supported. I'm honoured to be part of the government that took this initiative seriously and also, in the latest budget, invested more than \$250 million in mental health and addiction, and more to support children. It's almost \$64 million to deal with this issue and support many different organizations and many different places across the province of Ontario that deal with mental health.

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I'm not the expert. I listened to the Chair of the committee, who led the charge across the province of Ontario. He mentioned that he listened to a lot of people. I had the privilege and honour to attend an event with him in London, Ontario, at the convention centre, where many different stakeholders came from across Ontario to discuss this very issue. He was the keynote speaker. He spoke about what the people said across the province of Ontario; what they said in the north and the west and the east and in Toronto. Everywhere across the province of Ontario there's some kind of unification and some kind of agreement. This issue has to be dealt with in a professional manner.

The member from Don Valley East is today bringing the issue to us to break those silos. According to what I read in the bill, there are silos from childhood to adolescence to adulthood; that when people go through those transitions, for some reason, they fall through the cracks and are not being dealt with smoothly. As a result of that gap or the silos, so many people suffer. Some people fall off track, and it costs our society and our communities a lot of pain.

Therefore, I think his suggestion to move the responsibility from the Ministry of Children and Youth to the Ministry of Health—I'm not an expert in that field. I'm not sure how it's going to happen, but my interest in the whole bill—that's why I'm speaking and recommending that people support it to deal with it, to open a conversation, as the member from Oakville mentioned, because it's important to talk about this stuff. It's important to deal with it once and for all, whether it be in the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care or whether it remains with the Ministry of Children and Youth.

But in the end, do you know what? It doesn't matter which ministry we can be under. The most important thing is how we can invest our money, how we can invest our talent and skills and how we can deal with the issue. I guess we need a commitment, which we did as a government. We committed to this cause and to invest. We invested more than \$64 million to expand our support services for the youth who have faced some kind of mental or psychological challenges to deal with it. I think it's important to us to continue to open this conversation, to in the end come to a solution to protect our vulnerable people, our youth, because in the end, if we can save that youth and put them back on the right track, we'll have contributing members of society instead of members who take taxpayers dollars and also go—we waste lives and also create obstacles to the justice system and policing system. We will have people contributing instead of taking from the system.

It's an important topic. We've been open in the past and we'll continue to be open, I guess, in the future. Hopefully, when we send it to committee, we can come up with a solution. A good solution will please all people, especially when we get the professionals to deal with it.

In the end, as I said, I'm not a professional in this regard—whether it should be in this ministry or another ministry—but I think it's an important issue to be open about and to talk about because it needs to be solved.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to join in the debate this afternoon on Bill 117. At the start, I want to commend the member for Don Valley East, the member for Whitby—Oshawa and the member for Nickel Belt for bringing this very important bill to the floor of the Legislative Assembly today.

When I was elected last year—we all have public meetings that we host in our constituencies. I've been at a lot of public meetings over the years, some not so well attended. Others garner a little more public attention. I can remember asking the member for Whitby—Oshawa and the member for Dufferin—Caledon to come to my riding during a constituency week in October to talk about the recommendations of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. The room was packed. It was completely packed with people who wanted to talk about the report, who wanted to talk about the issues in my community, the issues that face Ontarians. I think people were unanimous in wanting legislators here at Queen's Park to act. In fact, let's face it: When we have meetings in our ridings, sometimes we tend to have people who support our particular party show up at these meetings. I was so impressed that we had people from every political stripe there, because—and I'll quote the member for Oakville—they, like the member for Oakville, said that we should move ahead, and I think he used the words that we should "do the right thing." I truly believe that Bill 117 is moving us forward and doing the right thing.

Let's remember that of the 23 recommendations in the select committee's report, this recommendation wasn't

number 23; it wasn't recommendation 19; it wasn't recommendation 10 or 5; it was recommendation 1. It was the very first recommendation that this all-party select committee presented for our ultimate unanimous consent and approval.

I again commend those three members for bringing that forward. I certainly support their initiatives. We've got a number of groups in my riding, people like Connect Youth, which is a young people's group that really looks forward to this happening and, truly, to young people being served in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Caplan has two minutes for his response.

Mr. David Caplan: Speaker, I thank you, but I especially want to thank the members from Whitby—Oshawa, Nickel Belt, Oakville, Kitchener—Waterloo, London—Fanshawe and Leeds—Grenville for their contribution to this debate today. I thank them for their words of support and I thank them for their support of Bill 117.

I want to pick up where the member from Leeds—Grenville left off, for I very much believe that Ontarians are ready for action. We have had a lot of work and a lot of consultation and a lot of thought, and a lot of goodwill has developed over the course of a great deal of time. This, I think as members have said, crosses all political stripes. I think that members have worked together in a very genuine way and have brought these issues forward. Now is the time for action.

I hope that every recommendation that the select committee made, all 23, are implemented. I think we've already seen some action: action on narcotics. This is a step, in a legislative vein, but there is a lot more that needs to happen in policy, in funding, in coordination and in service delivery. I think the identification of a regional basket of services is absolutely critical for us to be able to say that, whether you live in the city of Toronto or in the town of Kapuskasing, there are supports for mental health and addiction services for you and for your family. It's time to take this out of the shadows.

I encourage all of my colleagues here today to please support Bill 117. Now is the time for action. I think very much that that spirit has been captured here today. It will not be easy, this journey that we're on. Changing the status quo is always difficult, but it is worthwhile, it is just, and the time is right.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for this ballot item has expired. We'll vote on Mr. Caplan's bill in about 50 minutes.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE

Mr. Prue moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 174, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of contravening the rules of the road and causing death / Projet de loi 174, Loi modifiant le Code de la

route en ce qui concerne les contraventions aux règles de la circulation et le fait de causer la mort d'une personne.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for his presentation. Mr. Prue?

Mr. Michael Prue: I wish to preface my remarks today with profound thanks to Barbara Konstantopoulou, my constituent who came to me about a year ago with a problem that she perceived with the Highway Traffic Act, as it so hugely affected her extended family. Barbara is here today.

She came and she told me of the tragic events that happened to her sister, and she asked me if I could do something about it. I remember on that date telling her that I had already secured my second private member's bill for the term, and that the only chance there was was to have my name pulled out of the hat for the last remaining spots at the end of the session. In fact, it was, and when I phoned her up, she felt that that was a great sign, what had happened. She prepared all of the notes. She has been with me throughout this entire event. So I thank you for what you've done.

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Tragedy struck Barbara's family on May 27, 2009. A driver ran a red light 42 kilometres over the speed limit and it slammed into the car driven by Koula Nasiopoulos and killed her on the spot. The driver passed three stopped cars and collided, at impact, 122 kilometres an hour in an 80-kilometre-an-hour zone. The officers who attended the scene found, first of all, that there was no evidence of any alcohol or impairment of the driver. Secondly, although they wanted to, they could not take toxicological evidence, because that is contrary to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, to determine whether there was anything else that may have caused an otherwise good driver to go 122 kilometres an hour, go past three cars, go through a red light and ultimately kill someone. There was no past history of speeding by the driver, so they could not say that this was a recurring event. And last but not least, the black box inside the car indicated that there was not any speeding five minutes before the accident. The driver herself blamed car malfunction. She said she could not understand why the car speeded up when she did not want it to.

The police, having looked at all the circumstances, determined that there was not sufficient evidence to prove, beyond a reasonable doubt under the Criminal Code of Canada, that the driver was guilty of careless driving, and therefore could not lay that charge, in spite of the fact that someone was killed. The Highway Traffic Act, in turn, has no provision for "cause death," and therefore the police reluctantly had to lay a charge of running a red light. The crown attorney who looked at all the circumstances of this case had to say, "There is nothing we can do, except prosecute the driver for running a red light." The judge, sitting in judgment on the case, said that there was nothing he could do except find the driver guilty of running a red light. In the end, Koula Nasiopoulos died and the driver got a \$300 fine, \$65 in court fees and three demerit points.

Think about the circumstances. The entire family is here today. Think about the circumstances if this happened to you or your family, and whether you would have thought that justice was done. This is not a unique case in Ontario. It has happened, as far as I can tell—and there is some stuff in the blogosphere—four or five times. Mothers Against Drunk Driving have talked about it. Other groups have sprung up to talk about the sentence, the consequences and what has happened to the victim and the victims' families.

What is even, I think, worse to all people who would look at this is that the transcript of this particular driver will forever show that there was a \$365 penalty and three demerit points. After two years, as we all know in this House, those demerit points will be removed, and they will be removed soon. So all that will exist is a \$365 penalty for going through a red light.

This is not what I think we need to have. There will be no reference that the action caused death. The officers, the crown attorney, would be unable to do anything, if they were prosecuting this same person again, other than to say, "You ran a red light two years ago. You went through a stop sign or you speeded or you did something else this time," because all it would say is that the woman ran a red light.

This bill would allow the police, would allow the crown attorney, would allow the judges to have some latitude, where the consequences of the action are far more serious than what some would say might be a trivial traffic misdemeanour, to have something else done. It would allow the judge to assess the situation. The judge could, in all the circumstances of the case, say, "Yes, you ran a red light, and, yes, the crown has charged you with a more serious offence. But I've heard all the circumstances, and I'm prepared to allow a lesser plea of running the red light," or going through a stop sign, or 100 other things that one might do under the Highway Traffic Act. Or the judge might say, "This was particularly careless. You were going 42 kilometres over the limit, you passed three other cars that were stopped for the red light and you killed somebody," and impose a different penalty.

I'm not particularly worried about the penalty. The proposal talks about "between \$1,000 and \$10,000 and the possibility of up to six months in jail." But what is more important, I would say to all of you, is that there would be a different finding by the judge that would be on the transcript: that this person has, through their actions, caused the death of an innocent human being, the death or dismemberment or turned someone into a paraplegic. We need to record that. We need to have that information. The police need to have it. The crown attorney needs to have it. The judge needs to have it. Yes, even the defence attorney needs to know that, in advance of any trial.

I'm asking that the members here give that opportunity by passing this bill. I know it may be contentious to some, and I have heard that some honourable members will support the bill and some may not, but I am asking

you to support it today at second reading. I am asking you to look into the eyes of the family. The victim's husband is here. The children are here. The extended family is here. People who knew her and loved her are here, and they cannot and will not accept that the final outcome is a \$365 fine. There has to be something more that we, as a society, can do and should do when someone dies. We have to be able to say that the judge should be given that opportunity, because the judge in this case was not given that opportunity. Everyone in that courtroom, from the victim—even the defence attorney. Everyone in the courtroom felt that a \$300 fine was not the answer to what happened.

As I said, this is not a lone case. So I am asking this Legislature to pass this bill at second reading and to send it to committee. I have talked to some of my colleagues who feel that maybe the bill isn't exactly as it should be worded. I have to rely on legislative counsel, just as all of you do. The legislative counsel told me that this is what was necessary to get the bill before this House. I ask that it go to committee; that if you have suggestions, if you have options, if there are other things that might make the bill better, that you allow that process to happen.

I ask you to hear from this family, but I also ask you to hear from MADD Ontario and MADD Canada, who are aware of this and have some other cases. I ask you to hear from the police, I ask you to hear from the crown attorneys and perhaps even from the judiciary about what is needed to make their jobs better, so that they can properly adjudicate; so that they are not tied down to simple things of going through a stop sign, going through a red light or going a few miles too fast. Really, what they need is an option when something very serious happens.

1520

We know that we cannot bring Koula back. We cannot lessen the grief of this family, and they are not here for that. They told me today, when I met all of them—and most of them for the first time—that they are here not to seek justice for the deceased relative; they are here to seek justice for the people of Ontario. They want to make sure that the same thing that has happened to them does not happen to other families: to see someone who has killed a loved one get off with the \$365 fine.

I want to close: I think the more accurate thing I'm trying to do is not so much the fine, because the fine can be anything the judge levies, from \$1,000 to \$10,000, or, in particularly egregious situations, some time in jail. The important thing is to more accurately reflect the gravity of the offence by putting that on the transcript and, by doing that, deter future behaviours. Because if someone just ran a red light and that's all that's on there, what is to stop them from thinking that that wasn't so serious?

Please, when you're speaking, look into the eyes of the family and do what you need to do. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I am personally familiar with the sentiment behind this bill. The mother of my former con-

stituency assistant died under very similar and tragic circumstances. While she was walking down one of our main streets in Meadowvale one summer evening a few years ago, she was struck and killed by a speeding driver.

I want to start off by looking at some of the things on which the member for Beaches–East York and I appear to agree. We very much agree that this tragedy should not befall anyone else or strike any other family. I think we can agree that Ontario has among the safest roads in North America, and while collision-related injuries and fatalities continue to decline, one of the things that I'm sure we agree on is that we're always looking for ways to make our highways and roads safer. I think we agree that driving on Ontario roads without the appropriate level of care and attention is unacceptable and there's no way we should tolerate it.

I know that the minister and the ministry continue to focus on improving the behaviour of all drivers through a combination of initiatives that include legislation, public education and supporting the enforcement efforts of Ontario's police services. In our province, we've always been on the forefront of innovative efforts to improve our traffic laws. In fact, as part of the Road Safety Act, 2009, the ministry increased the penalties for some serious Highway Traffic Act offences, which include careless driving, not wearing a seat belt, failure to remain at the scene of a collision, running a red light and, of course, failing to stop for emergency vehicles. These changes became effective last year, on January 1, 2010.

The minimum and maximum fines for careless driving were increased: the minimum fine from \$200 to \$400, the maximum fine from \$1,000 to \$2,000. Drivers convicted of careless driving continue to face up to six months in jail, six demerit points and a licence suspension of up to two years.

On something that personally concerns me, because this was part of the cause in which the mother of my constituency assistant died, our recent street racing law is considered among the toughest and most aggressive driving countermeasures in Canada. Since September 30, 2007, drivers who put others at risk by driving aggressively have faced stiffer penalties under the Safer Roads for a Safer Ontario Act. Drivers who engage in street races, driving contests and stunts have faced, among other things, an immediate seven-day driver's licence suspension at roadside, an immediate seven-day vehicle impoundment at roadside and, upon conviction, a maximum fine of \$10,000, a two-year maximum licence suspension, 10 years if convicted again within 10 years, and up to six months in jail. The definition of "stunt" is very broad, and includes driving at 50 kilometres per hour or more above the posted speed limit, intentionally preventing another vehicle from passing, cutting off another vehicle or driving too close to another vehicle, pedestrian or fixed object.

The member was discussing whether the police officer has some latitude, which I believe are the words he referred to. Depending upon the circumstances, police officers today have the option of laying more serious

charges under the Criminal Code of Canada, which include dangerous driving, dangerous driving causing bodily harm, dangerous driving causing death, criminal negligence causing bodily harm and criminal negligence causing death.

The penalties if death is involved are extremely serious. The conviction for criminal negligence causing death is punishable with imprisonment for life.

In each case, all of the relevant circumstances have to be taken into consideration by the investigating officer, including whether or not charges should be laid. If the police officer is of the view that there is no reasonable prospect of a conviction under the Criminal Code of Canada—a charge of dangerous driving causing death, which is subsection 249(4)—then the officer may lay a charge of careless driving under the Highway Traffic Act, which is a provincial statute. The Highway Traffic Act governs the rules of the road, but not criminal conduct. A charge for a traffic offence should never take the place of a charge under the Criminal Code of Canada, because the purpose of the traffic offence charge is very different from a criminal charge.

This makes it very difficult to discuss the member's bill, because some of the provisions in his bill may be considered redundant, given that the sentencing principles already take mitigating or aggravating factors into account. Moreover, if the penalty structure for a part X Highway Traffic Act bodily harm or death offence becomes too severe and approaches criminal penalties, then it's possible that Ontario could be perceived as encroaching on federal jurisdiction, leading to the possibility that the legislation proposed could itself be struck down.

Dramatic increases in the penalties associated with part X Highway Traffic Act offences would likely further increase the number of charges that are contested in court and the complexity of the proceedings, which could, as an unintended effect, result in more strain on court and police resources.

The proposed bill will not be applicable to speeding other than street racing or to careless or distracted driving, as these offences are not found in part X of the Highway Traffic Act. Bill 174 would only be applicable to provincial offences, which apply, generally speaking, to less serious driving offences as opposed to the offences of criminal negligence or dangerous driving, which are found in the Criminal Code of Canada, which is federal legislation.

On that note, I'd like to pause and listen to the rest of the debate and consider what the other members say.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to rise and participate in this debate. At the outset, I would like to express, on behalf of my colleagues in the PC caucus and Tim Hudak, our sincerest condolences to the family. I know this must be a very difficult time. I am appreciative, as I'm sure the family is as well, that the member for Beaches–East York, Mr. Prue, is bringing this forward.

I think we can have a great deal of discussion about what the technicalities of the current legislation are. We can perhaps listen at length to rationale as to why the existing statutes serve us well. But I think that misses the point that Mr. Prue is attempting to bring to this House, and that is that with all of the good things that we have done in the province of Ontario to ensure road safety, there are some gaps.

Here we have one that I believe we as legislators have a responsibility to look at very seriously. As Mr. Prue has indicated, if the technicalities of how this statute is written need some work, we're all willing to sit down at committee and work those details out.

I think the essence is that an innocent life has been lost; that, based on the comments we heard, that we have been told about, given by the judge who was presiding over this matter—the judge reached out and called out for assistance, because even the judge felt that there was not sufficient basis on which any further remedy could, in fact, be prescribed here.

1530

I believe that there is an obvious need here for the ability of a judge to take into consideration that, while it was in fact a Highway Traffic Act violation, nevertheless, the fact that that caused bodily harm or death elevates this to yet another level, and that the appropriate remedy should be available to the courts to deal with. What I do believe is that if we don't take opportunities such as this to make the appropriate changes to legislation, then we're not doing our job.

I want to encourage the family, because it was a very similar circumstance in my riding that prompted me to bring before this very Legislature a private member's bill that called on the government to introduce tougher legislation relating to street racing, and we had this debate. A father and a mother lost their lives, leaving behind a seven-year-old, orphaned daughter, as the result of street racing not far from Bloomington. In fact, it was at Stouffville Road and Yonge Street in York region. It was that circumstance that prompted me to bring forward legislation. We had the debate here, and at that time, because of the circumstances of the House rising subsequently, we weren't able to get that particular legislation passed into law. To the credit of the government of the day, the government did subsequently take those very provisions of that private member's bill and incorporate it into what is now the government's street racing legislation.

So the encouragement I would offer the family is that you're here, the member for Beaches–East York is bringing this circumstance forward, and I'm sure that there will be very serious consideration given to what is being presented here today in honour of Koula, who, yes, lost her life. But I believe that this, while in no way making up for anything—certainly, I believe that as a family, you can take solace in the fact that, first of all, this issue is being discussed here, and I am convinced that the change that is being proposed by the member from Beaches–East York will ultimately, in fact, be

adopted by the government. As I said, we have some work to do in terms of some of the details, but the principle here cannot be argued.

I want to again, on behalf of my colleagues in the PC caucus, thank the member for Beaches–East York for bringing this forward. We will be supporting this, and we look forward to the subsequent legislative process that will, at the end of the day, ensure that this change is incorporated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm pleased to speak to this bill put forward today. I know that my colleagues from Nickel Belt and Toronto–Danforth are eager to speak to it as well in the short time allowed to us.

First, I want to commend, congratulate and thank my colleague the member from Beaches–East York for his initiative in bringing this bill forward. I know, because he has spoken with me about this proposition over a pretty lengthy period of time now since he was first approached by the family, that this matter has weighed on his mind and that he was eager to find a slot on private members' public business, a slot that he has today, to bring this matter before the House.

Let's make something very clear: The vote today is on the bill in principle, and if people of this chamber have a desire to do some fine-tuning of the bill then all the better. Then support the bill on second reading in principle and send it to committee, because that's where that kind of work is done. Let's lay to rest right now this very false argument that somehow this bill is unconstitutional.

I'm well aware of the difference between the federal jurisdiction over criminal law and the provincial jurisdiction over property and civil rights. I'm also well aware of the litany of appellate court decisions, including the Supreme Court of Canada, of course, that have said for many, many decades now, when contemplating the provincial Highway Traffic Act and the types of offences it has created, that the fact that a violation of the Highway Traffic Act is punishable by fine or imprisonment does not make it criminal law and is outside the jurisdiction of the province. So that argument just doesn't cut it, and that's the Supreme Court of Canada. If you can find a higher court, please show it to me.

The tragedy—and I have witnessed it so many times in my own community and many years ago as a criminal lawyer—of an offence being a simple failure to stop for a stop sign but nonetheless resulting, as we have here, not just in serious bodily harm and in death, but with the police and the courts having no choice but to charge for failure to stop for a stop sign or failure to stop for a red light and being bound by the provisions of the Criminal Code is enormous.

Sentencing is about a whole pile of things. Again, the courts have said that too. It's about deterrence, both specific deterrence and general deterrence. I put to you that there's an underlying function of sentencing, and that's a symbolic function, in that the sentence must and can and should in some way reflect the gravity of the

consequences of the behaviour. We have a dead woman here, and the meagreness, the trivialness, of the sentence that the court was compelled to impose does not speak well about our regard for that woman and her family.

So the member from Beaches–East York does two things here: One, he is right; we should be very clear about this. He creates a new offence, and he makes it clear that the purpose of this new offence is so that a Highway Traffic Act record—you should know that those records don't last forever; after five years they disappear. But at least for that five-year period, anybody reviewing that record—a court on a subsequent sentencing procedure, for instance, to determine whether the sentence on a subsequent offence might be—will understand that that previous misdemeanour, that previous offence, that previous violation of the Highway Traffic Act resulted in somebody's death. Because the mere fact that it's a conviction under 191.0.2: Everyone, "as a result of contravening any provision of this part," part X, "causes the death of or bodily harm to any person is guilty of an offence," and the author goes on with the sentencing provisions.

We should understand that part X of the Highway Traffic Act is the rules of the road provisions. Part IX is the speeding provisions. Curiously, and I don't know why, section 130, "Careless Driving," is included in the speeding provisions in part IX. I suspect that's an anomaly created by constant revision of the Highway Traffic Act over the course of many, many years, because careless driving would clearly more properly fit in part X of the Highway Traffic Act, the rules of the road, rather than amongst the speeding provisions.

So I say to the government: If they want to bring a bill moving careless driving into part X into the Highway Traffic Act, I'd be pleased, on behalf of New Democrats, to stand up in support of it and to expedite its passage.

This is all quite an aside. When we look at the offence of racing—and reference was made to it by the government spokesperson—we see that racing is accompanied by the prospect of a minimum fine of \$2,000 and a maximum fine of \$10,000. The proposition contained in Bill 174 has, again, a maximum fine of \$10,000. So it's well within the framework, and the courts have considered the racing provisions of the Highway Traffic Act in various appeals. The framework of the sentencing in terms of monetary sentence is entirely consistent with what's already in the Criminal Code with very, very serious offences.

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But let's understand this as well: There isn't such an offence in the Highway Traffic Act, part X, of racing causing death. This bill, Bill 174, would permit a court to convict a person of racing causing death or racing causing bodily harm, and their record would show that. Isn't that important? Isn't that relevant?

What my colleague has done is create an aggravated highway traffic offence from which a particular consequence flows. So any one of the part X offences, the rules of the road offences, if violated, results in bodily harm or

death, that bodily harm or death aggravates the behaviour and not only permits the court to impose a more serious penalty—at the end of the day, look, no penalty can ever restore a life. No penalty can ever restore a mother, a sister, a daughter, an aunt, a neighbour, the woman who volunteers at the local hospital or with her local school. But sentences can reflect society's regard for the victim and society's sense of repugnance at the behaviour.

I think this is an incredibly important bill that belongs in committee, so it can be worked with and discussed further. I urge people in this chamber who, if they have regard for those victims, to support this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: It's a privilege and honour to enter the debate.

Before I start, I want to, on behalf of myself and my colleagues, express my sorrow and sympathy with the family who's with us today. I want to thank you for working with the member from Beaches–East York to bring such an issue to us in this place to be debated and talked about.

This issue is important to me. As you know, I'm from London, Ontario. Every week we drive back and forth to London. We come Sunday night, drive back tonight after we finish here to our constituency office and deal with our constituents in London. Most of the time, driving the highway—and as you know, the highway's full of trucks, cars; people speed, and different weather conditions sometimes impose certain circumstances.

One time I was driving to London and one of the big, huge trucks wasn't paying attention or whatever and just pushed the brake and I guess slid and hit the back of my car and pushed me against the barrier, bounced me back to the truck, and I guess it dragged me almost about 200 or 300 metres. So I'm lucky I'm still alive and back to this place.

I think it's important for us to discuss this issue, to make sure that all the people who are driving on the highway or in the city are paying attention to red lights and stop signs and not racing—take this issue seriously because most of the time there's a lot of kids playing on the street, or elderly women or men walking by, which actually happened to my father one time. A person who was working all night I guess was tired. Every morning, my dad liked to walk just for exercise in London, and the guy just hit him. He happened to be his friend, and he apologized and said, "I worked all night. I was so tired, I didn't pay attention." So there are many elements. It happens all the time.

I listened to the member from Welland, who's the expert. He's a lawyer. He knows the law more than me and he knows the details. I thank him for explaining to us about this bill. I think he said it contradicts with the Constitution of Canada, and also that we'll be overstepping the jurisdiction of the federal jurisdiction.

The most important thing is to open the debate. To the member from Beaches–East York: Despite the result or outcome of the vote in the end, I think it's very important

for us to bring this issue to this House, debate it very well and learn. Probably many people across the province of Ontario are listening to us and might read about it. It's very important to discuss it, in the interest of me, you and all of us across the province of Ontario, and to create some kind of safety mechanism to put in place.

I know we have the best safety record on highways in the province of Ontario and I know we have the busiest highway in North America, which is the 401. Also, we have a lot of conditions, a lot of people who, for many different reasons, race on the streets and in many different towns and cities because they think themselves cool; or some people who are not paying attention and they cross through a red light or a stop sign. They think it's their privilege, and they can do it because they are in a rush—they want to go to work or they want to go to a meeting—despite who's crossing or who's going to be affected as a result of their actions.

In principle, I'm supporting the bill, as the member from Welland mentioned. We can support it in principle and we'll see, when it goes to committee, where we can tweak it and listen to many different experts to see what we can do in terms of making sure that all the elements and mechanisms are in place to make sure that all the population across the province of Ontario, when they drive, when they walk in the streets or whatever they do—it's important for all of us.

I want to leave a few minutes to my colleague from Eglinton–Lawrence, who wants to speak about it. So thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a privilege, I believe, to be able to speak in this House today. To the family: Mr. Prue has spoken well, Mr. Kormos has spoken well about the necessity for this bill. Like them, I thank you for persisting in bringing forward this issue, because, as has been said, it's not just a question of what happened to your family, it's a question of what will happen to families across this province in the years to come.

Mr. Kormos thinks about these issues, has the legal training, has made the argument that this legislation is needed to broaden the armoury that a crown attorney and the police have to deal with behaviour that is destructive, that is deadly, that occurs on our streets. There's no question in my mind that if this bill needs to be improved, voting for it today, sending it to committee so that in fact all those who have a stake in this issue—the public, the police, the crown, all those who want to ensure the best possible framework of laws to protect people and their property on our streets will have that opportunity to come to speak. I have no doubt that a committee representative of everyone in this Legislature can make the changes that would be necessary to satisfy you legislators who are here today so that this bill can go forward.

Mr. Prue has a history of coming forward with practical, applicable, sensible legislation that would help

people in Ontario. He's done it again today. I thank him and I thank the family.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: I support this bill because, in many cases, the federal Criminal Code threshold is such that it's difficult to get proper justice. I introduced a bill in this House a couple of years ago with the same problem, where it is almost impossible to get a Criminal Code conviction for people who engage in drive-by shootings or have illegal firearms in their cars. It is sickening to see people who have shotguns—there's one before the courts right now about people with guns in their cars. Invariably, they get off on some federal technicality. I would love to see us take away their driver's licence and impound their cars, because the Criminal Code doesn't appropriately suit the bad behaviour.

I support this bill for that same reason. We've got to be more pragmatic in dealing with this kind of criminal activity that hurts families and people. We've got to do what we can to stop that from happening.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I too would like to start by offering my support to the family of Koula Nasiopoulos. I thank you for joining us for the debate today.

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I started my career working on the intensive rehab unit at the hospital in Sudbury. The story and the painful event that you have lived through, other people have lived through, and if they ended up in the intensive rehab unit, it was because they were severely disabled by a similar tragedy.

In order for the family and themselves to get closure, many things come into play—the type of support they have, the therapy they get—but one big part for a family needing closure after a motor vehicle accident is that they want justice to be done. They want a fair and equitable justice system, as the member from Welland says, that matches the responsibility for what happened with the consequences of what happened. We know there is nothing any of us can do to bring Koula back, but as legislators today, we can do something to help bring closure to hundreds of Ontarians who will live through the same dramatic event that this family has gone through. We can help them bring closure to their family and we can bring a sense of justice when those events unfold. I will support this bill, and I hope you will do the same.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? Further debate?

Mr. Prue has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'd like to thank the members from Mississauga–Streetsville, Newmarket–Aurora, Welland, London–Fanshawe, Toronto–Danforth, Eglinton–Lawrence and Nickel Belt for their contribution to the debate. I'd like to thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora for so strongly stating that it needs to go to committee. I'd like to thank the member from Welland

for speaking about the responsibility that is incumbent upon this House and the criminal justice system and the traffic justice system to make sure that everything that can be done is being done, the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for talking about the inadequacy of the Criminal Code, and the other members for just generally being supportive.

To the member for Mississauga–Streetsville, who was the one and lone person—I do admire what you had to say. You were talking about technicalities and the worrying of those technicalities, but I would hope that what the member from Welland had to say might assuage some of the difficulties that you felt were inherent in the legislation. I do not pretend for a moment that the legislation is perfect. We came with a situation, and we went to legislative counsel. The legislative counsel put out a framework, and I am willing to work with any and all members to make sure that it will serve the best interests, not only of the family who was here today but of all Ontario citizens. This is an attempt to empower police, the courts, the justice system and everyone involved, to make sure that the punishment and the recording of that punishment fits what happened. That's what this bill is all about.

I would not be content, and I think all members ought not to be content, to see someone who has killed someone by running a red light at 42 kilometres an hour over the limit get a \$300 fine and \$65 court costs. That's what this bill is about.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business is now expired.

WIRELESS PHONE, SMART PHONE AND DATA SERVICE TRANSPARENCY ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE DES SERVICES DE TÉLÉPHONE MOBILE, DE TÉLÉPHONE INTELLIGENT ET DE DONNÉES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll first deal with ballot item number 1, standing in the name of Mr. Orazietti.

Mr. Orazietti has moved second reading of Bill 133, An Act to provide transparency and protection for consumers of wireless telephone services, smart phone services and data services in Ontario.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Orazietti?

Mr. David Orazietti: Thank you very much, Speaker. I certainly appreciate the support of all members of the House today. I refer the bill to the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): So ordered.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL
HEALTH ACT, 2010
LOI DE 2011 SUR LA SANTÉ
MENTALE DES ENFANTS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 2.

Mr. Caplan has moved second reading of Bill 117, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Act to transfer the administration of certain children's mental health services to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard some noes.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We'll call in the members after the next vote.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC
AMENDMENT ACT, 2011
LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT
LE CODE DE LA ROUTE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item 3.

Mr. Prue has moved second reading of Bill 174. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

Mr. Michael Prue: I would like the bill sent to the committee on justice policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It will be referred to the committee on justice policy. So ordered.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL
HEALTH ACT, 2010
LOI DE 2011 SUR LA SANTÉ
MENTALE DES ENFANTS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1556 to 1601.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Caplan has moved second reading of Bill 117. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Caplan, David

Clark, Steve

Dhillon, Vic

Flynn, Kevin Daniel

Gélinas, France

Hardeman, Ernie

Jones, Sylvia

Klees, Frank

Kormos, Peter

Marchese, Rosario

Miller, Norm

Prue, Michael

Ramal, Khalil

Tabuns, Peter

Witmer, Elizabeth

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura

Arthurs, Wayne

Balkissoon, Bas

Berardinetti, Lorenzo

Best, Margaret

Brownell, Jim

Cansfield, Donna H.

Colle, Mike

Delaney, Bob

Dickson, Joe

Jaczek, Helena

Johnson, Rick

Kular, Kuldip

Kwinter, Monte

Mangat, Amrit

Moridi, Reza

Oraziotti, David

Phillips, Gerry

Rinaldi, Lou

Ruprecht, Tony

Sandals, Liz

Smith, Monique

Sousa, Charles

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 15; the nays are 23.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All matters relating to private members' public business now being completed, I do now call orders of the day.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Phillips has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1603.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	
Vacant	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Kim Craitor, Bob Delaney
Garfield Dunlop, Phil McNeely
John O'Toole, Maria Van Bommel
Clerks / Greffiers: Valerie Quioc Lim, Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
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Bob Delaney, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Pat Hoy, Helena Jaczek
Norm Miller, Leeanna Pendergast
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Orazietti
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Kuldip Kular, Dave Levac
Amrit Mangat, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, David Orazietti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Michael A. Brown
Donna H. Cansfield, Aileen Carroll
Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Lisa MacLeod, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Reza Moridi
Bas Balkissoon, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Ted Chudleigh, Mike Colle
Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos
Reza Moridi, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yasir Naqvi
Bas Balkissoon, Steve Clark
Joe Dickson, Sylvia Jones
Amrit Mangat, Yasir Naqvi
Michael Prue, Mario Sergio
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Shurman
Wayne Arthurs, Aileen Carroll
France Gélinas, Jerry J. Ouellette
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals
Peter Shurman, Norman W. Sterling
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
David Caplan, Kim Craitor
Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Select Committee on the proposed transaction of the TMX
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Chair / Président: Gerry Phillips
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Frank Klees
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Gilles Bisson, Michael A. Brown
Frank Klees, Gerry Phillips
Peter Shurman, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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Second Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)



Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 18 April 2011

Lundi 18 avril 2011

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 18 April 2011

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 18 avril 2011

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's my privilege to introduce in the west gallery members of the Ontario duty-free association, here for their reception today, I'd like to remind all members, in room 228 from 11:30 to 1:30. We have with us Gerry Lee, Jim Pearce and Glenn Mills from the Ontario duty-free association.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very happy to introduce Frank Markel, CEO of Trillium Gift of Life, joining us today in the Legislature.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to ask the Legislative Assembly to join me in welcoming the Hardeman family to Queen's Park: my two grandsons, Jeremy and Christopher, and their sister Juliana. They also brought their parents, my son Scott and his wife Angela, and their grandmother, my wife Reta. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I would like to request unanimous consent from this Legislature—my colleague the whip is doing other duties—in reference to registering your consent to wear gift-of-life ribbons, if I may. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Unanimous consent to wear the ribbons: Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to extend a special invitation to Mr. Hugh Laird, from the Interior Systems Contractors Association of Ontario, and our former colleague from the same organization, Mr. Ron Johnson. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I want to introduce page Emma Redfearn's family—I think they may have some difficulty getting into the gallery; it's very busy here this morning. But I want to recognize Chris and Sarah Redfearn and Emma's brother Christopher, who travelled all the way from Ailsa Craig to be here with us this morning.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I should note that Sarah, Emma's mother, was a page in 1987, as well.

Mr. Kim Craitor: I'm really proud to introduce Steven Badger, a good friend from the riding of Niagara Falls. Steven, would you stand? Thanks. Steven is attending the University of Toronto and is currently enrolled in politics and sociology, and he thought this would be a good place to learn some lessons.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to welcome the father of page Ciaran Thomas to Queen's Park. Mr. Thomas is joining us to, rather cautiously, watch question period today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'd like to welcome my wife and my sister-in-law, here with us today to watch the democratic process take place.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: We're joined today by three students from St. Ignatius of Loyola high school: Marta Bielak, who won my holiday greeting card challenge; and Samantha Pufek and Natalie Zezuskek, the runners-up. Their art teacher, Ms. Liz Kalec, is here with them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the member from Willowdale and page Jia Jia Ho, to welcome her mother, Ping-Chun Hsiung, and her father, Yu-Nan Ho, to the gallery today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Also, on behalf of all members, I would like to extend a warm welcome back to the Legislature to Ron Johnson, who represented Brantford in the 36th Parliament. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

Seated in the Speaker's gallery this morning, I'd like to welcome three members of the family of student legislative usher Janette Piasecki. They are Vicky Zawada, Janette's mother; Natalia Zawada, Janette's sister; and Kasia Biernacka, Janette's grandmother. Welcome to Queen's Park.

I would like to welcome the students from the Old Colony Christian School, in my riding of Elgin-Middlesex-London, who are visiting Queen's Park today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Minister of Finance. On page 68 of your recent budget, the McGuinty Liberals say they'll permanently cut executive costs at hospitals and government agencies by 10%. But last week, an unelected staffer from your office announced yet another McGuinty backtrack, telling the London media that you will not go through with this. In fact, he said you won't do anything about executives who fail to reduce costs.

I ask the finance minister—the print is still wet from your budget and you're already backtracking: How much

more will Ontario families now have to pay for your failure to keep your basic promises?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: As the government that has hired more nurses, as the government that has built a track record of providing better health care, as the government that, first of all, began to measure and cut wait times, and as the government that has brought down the year-over-year rate of growth in health care, I can assure you that this policy is being implemented as we speak. As we move forward, we will deal with the health care challenges we face.

What I would ask the Leader of the Opposition is if he would join with Premier McGuinty in asking the federal government for a 10-year commitment on the health care accord, moving forward. They've been silent over there, other than to say that they're going to cut—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Maybe the finance minister was not aware that his staff has announced a major backtrack on another so-called savings mechanism by the Liberals—I'll refer to the story "Pay Targets Toothless" in the London Free Press last week.

Minister, one day during your budget, you vowed to cut executive salaries at hospitals and agencies by 10%. It figured prominently in your budget speech and, days later became a talking point for the Premier himself. The Premier, when asked about ballooning hospital executive salaries, said, "We're going to cut those salaries by 10%." There was no asterisk; there was no footnote.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: It was very clear.

Mr. Tim Hudak: You were very clear. But now you're backtracking yet again.

I'll just ask you, Minister: If you're backtracking on yet another toothless saving scheme, how much are you going to raise taxes to pay for it?

1040

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Premier is right; I'm right; the budget is right.

I don't know who said that, and frankly, they didn't speak for the government. It's interesting—these things happen all the time. For instance, the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, the other week, said that, rather than close the jails, we ought to shut down the Niagara Escarpment Commission. He'd rather protect jails than protect the environment. Is that the Leader of the Opposition's party's policy?

Unfortunately, we have nothing to compare the health care issue to. They've said nothing, other than that they're going to cut \$3 billion from health care. That means you could close every hospital on University Avenue in Toronto and not save that much.

We're standing up for Ontario. We're building a better and stronger health care system for all of our children and grandchildren.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, you're hardly standing up for anything. You're backtracking yet again on some-

thing that you highlighted in your budget, that the Premier highlighted last week. And now we see your press secretary, Andrew Chornenky, indicating that if hospital executives don't cut their budgets by 10%—well, I guess you'll give them a sharp "tsk, tsk," shake your head and then walk away and allow this bloated spending to continue.

The bottom line, Minister: You say anything to get elected, but when push comes to shove, you run away from even the basics in achieving any kind of savings for Ontario families.

Quite frankly, your financial house of cards is falling down, and all that's left is another McGuinty HST tax hike. Just tell us: Is it a one-point hike or a two-point hike? How are you going to pay for your runaway spending?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We laid out a budget, and we're going to cut executive salaries by 10%. We laid out a budget—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The honourable members will please come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We laid out a budget that moves forward on tax cuts, not tax increases.

The only thing missing from this debate is what the leader of the third party is going to do. What they've said is, they're going to cut \$3 billion from health care, possibly \$6 billion—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski:—withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): This is twice now that the member from Renfrew has used unparliamentary language in response to an issue raised from the government side. I'd just remind the honourable members: It goes both ways. The honourable member takes exception to a statement that gets made. I listened very clearly, and I can't judge what's in party policy. But I also hear questions being asked of the government that imply that the government is going to do something, too. So it goes both ways.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: They had to withdraw, because they don't have a plan. They haven't said anything other than that they're going to cut \$3 billion from health care. You're going to close hospitals. You're going to fire nurses. You're likely going to have to close schools. And do you know what? Ontarians get that, because you were part of a government that closed 38 hospitals.

We've been building a stronger health care system. We're standing up for better federal transfers—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the minister: Minister, all you're standing up for here is bloated hospital executive salaries. You said you'd cut them by 10%, but within

days you're backpedalling yet again, saying, "Well, that's now off the table." No wonder we're in the deepest deficit in the history of the province.

In your budget, you said you would find a way to find \$1.5 billion in savings, but you've backtracked on every scheme that you brought forward. Union leaders and arbitrators called your bluff on the so-called pay freeze; you backtracked. Your agency review pared a meagre 0.0002% off the budget; you backtracked. And now, on your so-called 10% cut to hospital executive salaries, you've backtracked yet again.

Minister, why should we believe anything in your budget? The bottom line is, you're going to increase taxes to pay for your runaway—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Leader of the Opposition confirms he's cutting health care. That's what he wants us to do. He's confirming that he's going to fire teachers.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Nepean. The member from Oxford.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Just today they said that he wants us to cut, but his own members are saying, "Keep the jails open." Then another member says, "Keep the jails open but shut down the Niagara Escarpment Commission." Another member says, "We're not going to touch the health premium," and then the Leader of the Opposition says that everything is on the table.

The only thing not on the table is a plan. The people of Ontario see through you. You're about closing hospitals, closing schools. You did it before; you'll do it again. We're going to stand up for the vital public services—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, honest to goodness, if you can't find a 10% reduction in the bloated executive and admin costs in this province, you have no business being finance minister in the province of Ontario. I can't believe you've already backtracked on something so straightforward, but I guess it's no surprise when you've seen, under Premier McGuinty, that while the economy grew by 9%, government program spending has gone up 77%—wasteful spending, bloated bureaucracies, LHINs, the eHealth boondoggle, and you won't even make good on a 10% cut in executive office costs. You've backtracked yet again.

I just want to ask you, Minister: Why won't you be honest? Is it a—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We've laid out a plan that has a detailed tax plan that goes out three years and then goes out seven years. We haven't seen their plan. We have to rely on the word of the leader that they are going to cut \$3 billion from health care.

But let's talk about health care. We've cut the use of consultants in health care by 50% from what that govern-

ment did. Yes, expenditures have gone up in health care, as they've gone up around the western world, because we chose to protect those vital services; we chose to reduce wait times; we chose to hire nurses and build 18 new hospitals. That leader and his party will close hospitals, just like they did before, they will fire nurses, and they have no plan. That's why they don't have a plan: They don't—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Rise up, Dwight.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Nepean.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, you say your budget is out three years. It didn't last three weeks. You've already backtracked on your cuts to executive pay; you've totally gone off the rails on your so-called wage freeze; and your agency, board and commission review is a joke—0.0002% savings. No wonder people want to see a change in the province of Ontario, a change that will cut the bloated bureaucracy, a change that will increase front-line health care spending.

Here's where our party stands: We will increase the health care budget and put the money into the front lines to reduce the bureaucracy, close the LHINs and pare down the bloated administrative costs. All we see from the McGuinty Liberals is yet another greedy tax grab.

Minister, if you can't do the job, why don't you just step aside?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: If they're so opposed to a 10% cut in executive salaries, why did they vote against it? Why did you vote against the risk management program that your own critic has called for?

That leader doesn't have a plan. Now he's going to increase health spending—42% of the budget—at the same time he's going to eliminate a deficit with no plan. We heard that once before. I remember, "I will not close a single hospital." I remember that. That was the former leader of that party, a government in which he served.

Ontarians want this government to protect their vital public services: health care and education. We will do that. We've laid out a plan to do it, a responsible, effective plan that's eliminating the deficit. Where is the third party's plan? They're hiding their plans to close—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1050

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. In this government's latest budget, it pledged to cut executive office costs in the broader public sector by 10%. If hospitals, universities and other public sector bodies fail to cut their executive office budgets by 10%, what penalties will this government levy?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Number one: We have talked about not funding any increases associated with that. That's number one.

There are important decisions and choices to be made here. The leader of the third party, on the one hand, gets up day after day, wants more money for this and more money for that and doesn't say how she's going to balance the budget. We've laid out a responsible plan to get back to balance as we protect the vital public services that Ontarians come to expect. It's about better health care, better education and a better future for our children.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, talk is cheap. It's really a very simple question, and I'm asking it because the storm clouds are gathering on the horizon. The Ontario Hospital Association is already on record as having real concerns with this government's proposal, so I'm going to ask the question again.

If hospitals and other broader public sector organizations refuse to reduce their executive office costs by 10%, will this government impose penalties, or will it simply stand by while public sector executives continue to cash in?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I remind the leader of the third party that they have to sign attestations—this is not an option to them—and that there are accountability agreements that we put into place.

This is about building a better health care system. There are difficult challenges. It is about making sure that more money goes to front-line services for nurses and for other vital health care services that all Ontarians have come to rely on. We've laid out a very careful plan. We've been able to increase funding for health care as we reduce wait times and hire more nurses, and do it in a more responsible fashion.

We're going to continue along that path, a path that will get us back to balance, because at the end of the day, a strong health care system depends on a strong economy and a strong government. We're committed to all of that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The sad reality is that this government's 10% edict is not worth the paper it's written on. They have no intent of putting anything into law requiring hospitals and other broader public sector organizations to actually cut executive office costs by 10%. They have no intent of imposing any kind of penalties whatsoever, nor are they prepared to actually get serious by imposing real, hard caps on top executive salaries in the broader public sector. There's nothing at all serious here.

Will the minister now admit that this scheme is all just for show and not much else?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Just last week we passed the budget bill, and that party voted against it. We came forward with legislation to actually do something, and that member and her party voted against it.

We have laid out a very careful plan that builds on our achievements in health care while getting us back to a balanced budget. We think laying out a plan is important. We think a balanced plan is important, one that shows how you're going to make those investments in health care while, at the same time, getting back to balance.

That's our challenge. We've risen to it. We have yet to hear a plan from that leader or her party.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Acting Premier.

It's never easy for a parent to drop their child off at a child care centre, so it's imperative that parents have the best information to ensure that child care facilities are safe. Today's Toronto Star indicates that parents lack this information because the McGuinty government has broken its promise made in 2007 to post information about serious incidents and violations at child care centres across Ontario.

Why is this government failing to provide parents the information that they need to protect their children?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I do appreciate the honourable member's question this morning. The wait is unacceptable, and I've made it very clear to staff today that I want, within weeks, within a month, to ensure that the licences and inspections are posted online.

I think it's important to point out, though, that those inspections are available at the daycare site. They are available to the public, but they are not available online, and that is very important. I can say to the honourable member that staff at the ministry are very happy to have received this responsibility at the beginning of this year. That is why we are working diligently to ensure that families get this important information in a very timely way. I appreciate that the honourable member has brought that to the floor today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In 2007, after the Toronto Star revealed that children at some Ontario child care centres were being hit, kicked and abused, the McGuinty government promised to publicly post serious-incident and inspection reports.

There were more than 5,000 such incidents at child care centres last year alone. Full information is already posted by the city of Toronto for Toronto child care centres, but parents elsewhere can't access the same kind of information.

When will the government finally fulfill its promise that was made four years ago and make serious-incident reports public across the province?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm happy that I have the opportunity to address the distinction between the incident report as opposed to the inspection of child care. Incident reports are very serious documents, and we have been working with the privacy commissioner—

Interjection.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I say to the member from Welland: This is about privacy. This is about the privacy of individuals who may have been involved in a particular incident in a child care facility.

We want to make sure that families and the public have the information they should and can legally have.

That is why we continue to work on this very important issue around access to information. We are committed to making sure that families have it, but we want to make sure that when we do, it is provided in a way that is also sensitive—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: That answer makes me much more nervous than what I was expecting. Those were weasel words, if I ever heard them, around the issue.

Interjections.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Today's Toronto Star story is another indication of just how low a priority child care has become for this government, with tens of thousands of parents waiting for a space, fees rising and centres closing across this province, home-based child care operating without any licence or inspection, before- and after-school child care programs being farmed out to for-profit corporations and lack of real information about serious incidents that are happening in child care centres in Ontario.

I'd like to know when the McGuinty government decided that Ontario parents no longer deserve safe, affordable, accessible child care for their children.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I think it is unfortunate that the honourable member does not know or understand that we have invested significantly in child care, and we have extended access to families by providing more than 70,000 new child care spaces. In addition to that, we have required that child care facilities post their inspections on the premises so that families are able to access that information when they go to the premises. In addition to providing that, we also require child care providers to ensure that families who have their children going there know that that is there.

By the way, we have created the early childhood educators college. Now there is a professional college so that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The member from Hamilton East should be in his seat.

New question.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the Minister of Finance. The news of this major backtrack on your vow to claw back \$1.5 billion in spending through a 10% cut to executive salaries was delivered by an unelected staffer from your office. You're the one who's accountable to Ontario families, not some faceless political staffer in your office.

Why didn't you announce this major backtrack on yet another restraint scheme yourself?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The policy, I'm proud, passed second reading last week here in the House. I think it's before a committee. We will work to enforce that policy.

I think it's important to note that they voted against it, and they're relying on just taking out of context a number of comments that were made in a newspaper article.

The only other thing missing in this debate is any plan from that party other than to cut at least \$3 billion from health care. We're waiting to see their plan. They've been missing in action on health care for the last seven years.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Minister, maybe it took all your energy to admit that your wage freeze failed because union leaders and arbitrators ignored it, or that, for all the fanfare, your streamlining effort failed to pare anything more than 0.0002% off your massive deficit. You spent the last year twisting yourself into a pretzel to sell a greedy HST tax grab after the Premier promised not to raise taxes. It must be tiring being the one to shill for all the backtracking all the time. Minister, is that why you took a break and put out your staffer to admit that you're letting executives at public agencies ignore your toothless scheme to control spending?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We laid out a plan for deficit reduction and we're overachieving that plan. I expect there will be more good news in that capacity in the very near future.

We have laid out a range of cuts—some modest, some more than modest. I'm proud of the fact that we've reduced the average rate of public sector settlements in Ontario to below the federal government, below municipal governments and below the private sector. We will work with our partners. We will continue to build on those successes.

We reject their approach, which is to beat up public servants and to downgrade nurses and teachers. They called nurses hula-hoop workers; we think they're important contributors to society and to health care.

We reject your approach. No one wants to go back to those days. We'll continue to work with the entire broader public sector to build better-quality public services for all Ontarians.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Marjory and Paul Springer from Sudbury have been married for 66 beautiful years. In order to stay living together, the Springers had to move outside of Sudbury to a long-term-care home in Arthur because there was no way to get them in the same room in the same nursing home in Sudbury. But now, their request to stay together in the same room is costing them more money than they can afford.

Can the minister explain why seniors like Marjory and Paul are being told to pay up or live apart for their final years?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. I read the story of Marjory, Paul and their family, and it is indeed a story that calls out for a response. I'm very, very happy today to tell you that we are going to be changing the rules so that couples

who are living their final years in a long-term-care home will be able to share a room together for as long as they live.

They should not be required to pay a premium. We are committed and have taken several steps, which I'll talk about in the supplementary, to encourage families to be reunited in long-term care.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm sure the Springers will be very happy, but there are many, many other couples—throughout my riding, anyway—who are trying to have what we call couple reunification. I can talk about a couple in Val Caron who presently have lost all of their home care services because they refused the first bed available. They refused the first bed available because one would have been at one end of town and the other one would have been at the other. I have clients who have been apart for over five years in Sudbury, asking for spousal reunification, and they can't get together.

I'm happy for the Springers—really happy. But why is it that spousal reunification is at the bottom of the list when it comes to who gets what long-term-care bed?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I do want to say that the member opposite actually has it wrong. Spousal reunification goes to the top of the list. It is our highest priority.

When we took office in 2003, we heard horror stories about couples who had spent their whole lives together and all they wanted to do was spend what was left of their lives together. We've taken significant steps to get couples living together. This is an important next step forward, where we will remove the financial penalty that would come with spouses living together.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question this morning is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. "Small businesses in Ontario"—job creators and innovators—are looking "for relief from the burden of regulation and taxation." Well, Minister, I agree.

The McGuinty government has initiated many measures in this area, and I know for a fact that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade has been doing something in this area. The minister and her staff have been tackling this issue head-on by tirelessly working to create a dialogue between the government and various business sectors in order to find out what their needs are and how they can be met.

We need Ontario's businesses and corporations at their very best in order to stay competitive provincially, nationally and internationally, so I'd like to ask the minister to inform the House how her ministry is working to create a healthy and prosperous working environment for Ontario's small businesses.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I very much appreciate the question. There is a huge contrast between how we interact with business in our communities and how the opposition interacts with business and representatives from their communities.

In our government, we've reached out, in particular to small business, to various sectors like BILD, like the hotel and motel association; we've reached out to labour. We've listened to what groups have had to say so that we can do our job better.

Let me say how this contrasts: Opposition members want to throw people out of their dinners; they want to throw people out of their meetings. It harkens back to the Harper days, the Harris days, and now, of course, the Hudak opposition party—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind the honourable member: I've talked previously about making reference to individual names and, particularly, who has been leading the parties.

Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: The minister brought up some very interesting points. I, too, wonder what the members opposite have to hide and why they haven't revealed any of their platform issues—other than their usual mantra of having "respect for Ontario's hard-working families." How can they respect Ontario's families if they constantly condemn and shut out the voices of people representing hard-working Ontario families? But I digress.

Minister, perhaps you can expand on the other facets of how the McGuinty government is supporting businesses through the Open Ontario plan.

The people in this province hear a lot of promises about job creation and investments, but can the minister offer them some solid proof of how the government is serving all Ontarians, regardless of their political stripes?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I can see why opposition members are so antsy. We've got a great track record in helping businesses create jobs in every community across Ontario—those that have been hard hit during the recession; those that have flourished—and we're not finished. The 2011 budget, just tabled, announced operations for 10,000 new jobs, not just in Liberal ridings but in Conservative and NDP ridings as well.

Just the other day, we had a great announcement at Rich Products in Fort Erie, a great company that's busy creating new jobs.

What's more important for people to know is that these are the initiatives that the opposition members—even the member from Fort Erie—voted against. Every measure for job creation, opposition members voted against. That's something that we're going to make sure everyone—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CHILD CARE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is to the Minister of Education. We now know that the McGuinty Liberals are no better at keeping their promise to post daycare inspection and serious incidents reports online than they were at promising to post their expenses online.

Four years ago, the government vowed to publish regular online reports of abuses and unsafe conditions at child care centres. Now we learn that that promise has

been broken. Why did the government make the promise to protect our children if they were only going to break it?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: What I will remind the honourable member is that since coming to government, we have made child care a priority, which was not the case when they were in government. We've done a range of things, including investing in 70,000 new child care spaces. We've also provided for families online information about the licensed child care facilities in their communities.

Within the next few weeks, we will be providing people with information about all the inspection reports of all the facilities that have received them.

The part about incidents reports: We continue to work with child care providers and with facility owners, as well as with families, to understand what is the best way to ensure that there is important information online made available to families, at the same time ensuring that families—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

1110

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: This is a very serious issue, as daycare abuses continue to be kept secret. Ontario families no longer have confidence in the McGuinty government. As one child care advocate said, the McGuinty Liberals were put on the spot four years ago, so they said they would fix the problem, but they have not. The minister is no better at taking accountability for breaking that promise to post those reports online than the Minister of Finance was for backtracking on getting control over bloated executive salaries. Both allowed others to take the heat for failing to live up to the word they gave to Ontario families. Why, Minister, have you not lived up to your commitment to Ontario families?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I think it's very important that the honourable member would know that we are the party that has made it very clear that families should have this information. We have posted online those facilities in Ontario that are licensed. We will be posting online the inspection reports of those facilities, and we are working with all those involved around what is the best way to ensure that information around incidents is presented in a way that certainly protects the children who may have been impacted, and at the same time ensuring that families who would be going to a facility would be aware of what has taken place.

We are absolutely committed and devoted to ensuring that this information is made available, and made available in a legal way. We are committed to our children, to our youngest learners. That is something that was not demonstrated when the honourable member was part of government. They did nothing—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Labour. When New Democrats first read the Dean health

and safety report, we had high hopes that, finally, Ontario's woefully inadequate health and safety laws would be reformed. Here was a solid report, and Mr. Dean and his advisory council deserve to be commended. But on closer inspection, it's clear that Bill 160 fell far short of the Dean recommendations. Employers, labour and even the minister's own interim health and safety prevention council are all recommending a major overhaul of this legislation. Does the minister plan to just ignore these informed voices and do lasting harm to the health and safety of Ontario workers?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let me first respond in this way: We are so very grateful for the excellent work that the expert panel did in providing us with that report. It was the consensus report provided by labour, by academics, by business, who all had the same concern as we do: that we want our workers to be safe.

The bill is now before the committee. We want the committee to deliberate over these issues. We are welcoming those reactions. We've had consultations. And let me say this as well: It was this party and this ministry that appointed an interim prevention council to deal with the very issues that you speak of. We're very receptive. We've said from the beginning that this is not about being partisan; this is about working together for the benefit of those injured workers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Well, that's interesting: "non-partisan." We've put in about 500 recommendations; you've listened to one.

We supported most of the recommendations of the Dean report. The problem is that parts of Bill 160 actually contradict the Dean panel's recommendations. That's not just our opinion; that's the opinion of the minister's own interim health and safety prevention council. That's why New Democrats voted against the bill at second reading.

Will this government make major changes to Bill 160, or is it going to throw away a once-in-a-generation opportunity to significantly improve the health and safety of Ontario workers?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Our reaction to the concerns that are being brought forward are made public on our website. We have, on there, responses to our interim prevention council, dealing with the issues that we all share.

I've said from the beginning that what we want is to have an efficient and effective system. This is the largest change that we've made in over 35 years. We want to protect those workers. And we are listening. We will continue to deliberate over those issues. I've had consultations with all stakeholders, including union members, who are appearing today before the committee.

I think we should give ourselves latitude and some respect, because what we're dealing with is not between political parties. This is not about playing politics; this is about helping those people on the front lines. It's about protecting our workers and reducing our injury rates, and we will continue to support them.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Energy. There's no doubt that Ontario's electricity system is turning the corner. Eight years ago, our power system was, by all accounts, an ugly, unreliable mess from top to bottom. Our system lost generating capacity the equivalent of Niagara Falls running dry; the PC government of the day was trying to privatize Ontario's transmission grid; the use of coal had increased by 127%; and the province was on life support from temporary leased generators and imported electricity that cost Ontarians \$1 billion in less than two years.

What progress is the government making in cleaning up our electricity system to build a healthier future for our kids and grandkids?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for Oak Ridges–Markham for her question and assure her indeed that tremendous progress is being made to clean up the dirty, unreliable mess the PC Party called an electricity system.

The member, and other members who are heckling right now, may be interested to know that, compared to the first quarter of 2003, the first quarter of 2011 saw a reduction of 90% in coal use, probably for the first time ever.

We've permanently shut down eight coal-burning units so far. That's like taking 2.5 million cars off Ontario roads. We've announced the conversions of the Atikokan and Thunder Bay generating stations. Ontario will be completely coal-free by 2018—not an easy thing to do, but we have a plan and we have the leadership, unlike the opposition—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: The Conservatives' historical record of disregard and disrespect for the health and well-being of Ontarians is perhaps the most offensive memory I have of their last two terms in office. They fired water inspectors, meat inspectors and nurses, and they closed hospitals across Ontario. They increased the use of coal over their eight years by 127%, coal that emits neurotoxins, mercury, lead, arsenic and sulphur dioxide. As a physician, I can tell you the fact that their government did that goes beyond just irresponsible.

Minister, will the government take the advice of doctors and nurses and stick to an energy policy that embraces clean sources like wind and solar and has no more place for dirty coal?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Absolutely. Our government has a long-term energy plan that gets us out of coal, modernizes our electricity system and makes clean, renewable energy an important part of our supply mix.

I mentioned that the use of coal is already down 90% in 2011, compared to the same period in 2003. But the member is right: The PC Party really does make some peculiar choices when it comes to protecting the health of Ontario families. It reminds me of the vote on a smoke-free Ontario, something that keeps cigarettes out of the hands of kids. Only six members of this Legislature vot-

ed against that one. One of those six members is now the Leader of the Opposition.

We're determined to build a clean and reliable energy system in this province, with or without the support of the opposition.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, last Thursday, a delegation led by the mayor of Sarnia, from my community of Sarnia–Lambton, met with you to discuss the surprise budget announcement to close the Sarnia jail. Minister, will you apologize to the people of Sarnia–Lambton for threatening to cut the courthouse if they continue to criticize your hare-brained scheme to close the jail?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Oxford.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member who was Minister of Agriculture would remember the day trading at Agricorp, so I don't think he should be intervening in this particular matter.

But to answer the member: The member was at the meeting that we were at, and I was delighted to see him there. I know that member is a person of integrity, and I know that he knows that no such threat was made at that meeting. No such threat has been implied in any way. I really count on him, as a person who was sitting there, to confirm that no such threat was made. He and I know that. Other people at the meeting would know that. I don't know where that story came from, and it's most unfortunate.

1120

Mr. Robert Bailey: Back to the Minister of Community Safety: Minister, the mayor of Sarnia and other people who were at that meeting came away with that direct inference from your minister and your staff.

The delegation led by Mayor Bradley came to Queen's Park last Thursday with serious, legitimate questions. They came to meet with you. They came out of that meeting saying that they felt "insulted and bullied by your staff."

In retrospect, do you think that being a bully was the right tactic to take with the people from my community who would want answers and respect?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I ask the member, in his heart of hearts, to really reflect upon that meeting. I think he knows, and I know, that no such thing happened. A good deal of listening took place to the representations made. The member was there as well.

I know these matters are difficult. When the Conservative government closed jails in Cobourg, Haileybury, L'Orignal, Waterloo–Wellington, Parry Sound, Barrie, Peterborough, Guelph, Cornwall, the Burtch facility, Lindsay, Whitby, Brampton, Millbrook and Sault Ste. Marie, I know there were great difficulties at that time. It isn't easy for a community.

Ministry staff make available information. You're always asking that we try to save some money; we're endeavouring as a ministry to do so. But I know the member knows that no such thing occurred—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Mayor Bradley and a delegation from Sarnia came to Queen's Park last week to plead the economic consequences of the Premier's decision to close the Sarnia jail. Not only were their concerns completely ignored, but they were sent packing with a veiled threat that their courthouse may be next on the chopping block. Is that how this government responds to evidence and community input—with threats?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Community Safety.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I can tell the leader of the third party that absolutely no such thing occurred. There was no indication of that in any way, and no hint of it in any way. I don't know where that really came from.

There was a very good meeting that took place between those of us who have responsibility for the correctional system across this province and a delegation that came, along with our friend Bob Bailey, who was at that meeting. There was a very good dialogue that took place. They put forward some of the information that they had. Our ministry indicated what some of our information was. I thought we listened with a good deal of respect and interest to the delegation that was there. In no way, shape or form was any such threat ever made at that meeting.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Not only will the closure of the Sarnia jail hurt the community, but the government's financial reasoning simply doesn't hold water. Mayor Bradley will ask the Sarnia city council to officially oppose the closure of Sarnia jail, and today, members from OPSEU are here to provide additional evidence against the closure.

Given that this hastily considered decision will have serious effects in southwestern Ontario, and in light of flawed number-crunching and community opposition, will the government just reverse this wrong-headed decision?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I know that the member herself was not part of a party that was in power, but the members who were in power at that time realize how difficult it is to make decisions of this kind, to try to find efficiencies and not have it reflect upon a community. I can assure her that all consideration was given to the representations which were made by members of that community. Our ministry has done an analysis and believes that they can save a considerable amount of money in this regard.

I'm actually really surprised that the New Democratic Party—where the federal leader is talking about a different story on jails and prisons in this country—that

this member is up defending the keeping open of jails. But I can say that all matters will be taken into consideration on this particular—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Revenue. Minister, on Friday, the Toronto Star reported that a printing error by the Canada Revenue Agency on a tax form may cost some Ontario residents hundreds of dollars in missed provincial tax credits and benefits. I've heard from a lot of constituents in Willowdale, particularly seniors and those with lower incomes, who are concerned that the federal mistake may cost them money that is rightfully theirs to keep.

Minister, what steps are you taking to correct the error made by the Canada Revenue Agency so that Ontarians get to keep their own money that they should be keeping?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I thank the member from Willowdale for that very important question. In fact, we are aware of the printing error that did take place with the CRA tax form. I want to assure Ontarians who have already followed the printed instructions that they will not be denied any money to which they have been entitled. The CRA has announced that the online versions have been corrected, and their systems will recalculate the tax bill and correct the mistake.

I would also encourage all Ontarians, if they can, to go online to visit the Ministry of Revenue's website, ontario.ca/taxcredits, to find out more about the credits and benefits that they may be eligible for.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. David Zimmer: Minister, what I worry about is that seniors and low-income Ontarians may decide not even to file the tax return because they're now under the impression that they're not entitled to the provincial tax credits as a result of the federal error.

Provincial tax credits and benefits provide significant tax relief to Ontarians, especially seniors and low-income Ontarians. Minister, let's make sure that they don't lose those benefits and tax credits because of the federal mistake. Can you tell us again just what tax credits and benefits are available for low-income Ontarians and seniors?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: The member is right: Our government has been doing a lot when it comes to the real needs of low-income families and seniors in this province.

There are a few things that we have done to help, and one is the permanent sales tax credit, which gives up to \$260 to each family member each and every year, and that's a permanent tax cut. We've also doubled the senior homeowners' property tax grant to \$500; it was \$250. And last December, over six million Ontarians received their second HST transition cheque, and that's \$300 for a single person and \$1,000 for a family.

I would highly recommend that Ontarians go online to ontario.ca/taxcredits to find all the credits that they are eligible for.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Acting Premier, the Minister of Finance. His budget papers indicate that the Ministry of Transportation plans to spend over \$2.1 billion on provincial highways this year. Could the minister inform my constituents if he plans to spend any of that money on Highway 6 through Wellington-Halton Hills? Or will he be using that money as a pre-election slush fund for ridings currently held by Liberal MPPs?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Ministry of Transportation has an ordinal ranking of highway work to be done in any given year. I will have to undertake to get back to the member on his specific question.

I will point out that some of the largest roadworks in the province are now going on in ridings held by the opposition. These are done—

Interjection.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: My colleague reminds me of the road in Welland, for instance, which is a very good example.

These priorities are set carefully. One thing that we can say with some certainty is that we believe in these kinds of investments. Not only do they create jobs; they make a better economy. I look forward to their plan for roads in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Highway 6 from Guelph to Fergus was last resurfaced more than 15 years ago, and its condition is now deplorable. It needs to be repaved this year. And south of Guelph, we need a bypass around Morriston in Puslinch township, a project I've raised in this House many times over the past three and a half years.

There are other urgent transportation priorities in our riding. For example, we need full traffic signal lights at the intersection of Highway 7 and Jones Baseline in the township of Guelph-Eramosa. And I just received a whole list of project needs from the town of Halton Hills that I will share with the Minister of Transportation.

What assurance will the Acting Premier give this House that the decisions on highway projects will be based on genuine, demonstrated needs and not determined by the requirements of the Liberal seat-saver program?

1130

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That member and his party downloaded highways to municipalities. You cut funding to highways. I'll take you through these. Transit funding averaged less than \$450 million a year province-wide, and it varied annually by huge sums. You cancelled the Eglinton subway. You averaged less than \$670 million a year province-wide—about a third of what we're doing.

Just to give you another example: this year, in a Conservative-held riding, \$320 million over three years in Carleton-Mississippi Mills. Mind you, that might be a Liberal riding in the none-too-distant future.

I can say to that member and the party opposite: no plan except to close hospitals, cut health funding, cut

education, download services to municipalities. We see—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CONDOMINIUM LEGISLATION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Consumer Services. For the last four years I've been working to amend the condo act to give greater protection to the province's almost one million condo owners. Liberal MPPs spoke in support of my Bill 79 when I introduced it last year. But when I recently asked the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills to send my bill for public consultations, my request was shut down by every single Liberal MPP in that committee.

Minister, why is the government so adamantly opposed to giving condo owners a chance to have their say and propose ways to improve the condo act?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I appreciate the question that the member is asking. First of all, of course, the ability of a bill to be discussed by a committee is up to the House leaders. I would suggest that you speak to your House leader, who could talk to the Tory House leader and to our own House leader about that particular issue.

But as the member well knows, we've just recently conducted a survey of condo owners across this province. We are currently studying the various recommendations that came out of that particular survey, and undoubtedly we will be making changes to the condo act in the future. As he is well aware, there are over half a million condo owners in the province of Ontario. We took this survey very seriously. We are currently examining the various responses that we got back, and in the near future we will be introducing something with respect to the condo act.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My office receives thousands of complaints every year from condo owners victimized by some bad developers and some bad property managers. Condo owners tell me they have no other recourse but to spend thousands of dollars in court.

Minister, when will the government acknowledge that the current legislation does not provide enough protection for condo owners and finally set up a review board that can resolve disputes quickly and cheaply?

Hon. John Gerretsen: As the member well knows, when somebody becomes a member of a condominium corporation, they have voting rights. An annual meeting is held, at which time a board of directors is elected, and that particular board of directors makes the necessary arrangements with the condo managers and with the other suppliers at that condo. So there are democratic rights in place right now for a condo owner to exhibit his or her will about a particular issue. By and large, it's working across the province of Ontario. I would suggest that the individual condo owners make themselves aware of their rights and bring those concerns to the board of directors, which is made up of other members of the condo corporation, just like they are themselves.

But right now we are studying the recommendations that came out of the survey, and we will be making recommendations in due course to improve—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, in my constituency office, I sometimes hear stories about employers mistreating their employees. Recently, the Toronto Star reported that new Canadians, alongside the Workers' Action Centre, found wage theft happening in this province—obviously, a very serious issue. The article raised concerns about employment standards enforcement and said that we need to do more to make enforcing the Employment Standards Act a priority.

Minister, can you tell the House what you're doing to stop wage theft and other exploitation happening to vulnerable workers in Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let me be clear to all employers: Any form of mistreatment to your employees is unacceptable. And when it comes to moving forward on issues such as employment standards, we all know that more is accomplished by working together. That's why my ministry is working hard to ensure that employees, whether new Canadians or young workers, know their rights.

We have also made enforcing the Employment Standards Act a priority. We've committed more resources than both the previous governments combined. Here are the facts: Between 1989 and 2003—that's between the NDP and the PC governments—there were 97 prosecutions initiated under the Employment Standards Act. Since 2004, there have been over 1,800. We've also tripled the number of employment standards officers who are out there investigating every day. We've recovered over \$50 million in wages owing to vulnerable employees, and we're handling far more claims than when we first started.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Minister, that's good news that we've seen such an increase in prosecutions. That's an issue that I know has been raised by the Auditor General at public accounts, so it's good to know that we've responded.

However, Minister, the article also said that new Canadians find it difficult to even file a claim. It can be a very complicated, daunting, overwhelming process for them. Last year, 118,000 newcomers arrived in Ontario. Lots of them are arriving in Guelph these days. These newcomers work in a variety of jobs when they arrive, and it's important that they know their workplace rights. What is the government doing to help new Canadians file a claim in Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'm proud to say that more people are aware of their rights than ever before. We're reaching out to employers and employees through educa-

tion, outreach and partnership activities. We provide new Canadians with multilingual service in 23 different languages in our call centre, as well as with employment standards information. Also, we have more than 50 ethnic community magazines and publications in Ontario that we use to get the message out. We've also featured videos on YouTube and our website that talk about knowing your rights and your responsibilities, in all different languages. These materials are helping all Ontarians understand their employment rights and responsibilities and direct them to the ministry's multilingual resource portal.

The employment standards system in Ontario is more modern, more up to date and more diversified than ever before.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like all members to join me in welcoming, in the Speaker's gallery today, Mr. Hugh O'Neil, who represented Quinte in the 30th, 31st, 32nd, 33rd, 34th and 35th Parliaments. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Nickel Belt has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care concerning spousal reunification. This matter will be debated on Wednesday, April 20 at 6 p.m.

NOTICE OF REASONED AMENDMENT

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 71(c), the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has filed notice of a reasoned amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 179, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act respecting adoption and the provision of care and maintenance. The order for second reading of Bill 179 may therefore not be called today.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to remind the members of the luncheon being hosted by the Ontario duty-free association in room 230.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Brad Duguid: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: In a response to a question earlier today, I think I said that we'd be out of coal by 2018. The actual time is 2014. I don't know if I said that, but I got a note that said that, so I just wanted to correct the record.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. That is a point of order. The member can correct his own record.

There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1139 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'd like to introduce some of my constituents from Milton who are here in support of the Milton hospital. In the west members' gallery are Samantha Attew, Matt Burger, Councillor Mike Cluett, Keith Hesse, Martin Capper, Andrew Roach, Councillor Greg Nelson, and Pablo Ricardo, who I believe is filming somewhere. They are all accompanied by my wife, Sandy Chudleigh. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We miss Sandy in Elgin-Middlesex-London. Dorchester misses you.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Could I ask permission to wear a button supporting the Milton District Hospital?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. Frank Klees: This is national Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week. I and my colleagues in the PC caucus want to encourage anyone who has not yet registered their consent to be an organ donor to do so.

Yesterday, the Premier sent out a Twitter message in which he pointed out that there are some 1,500 people on a wait-list for an organ transplant. "Please sign up," he said. Sadly, his link directs people to an antiquated, cumbersome and unreliable system of registration.

It has now been more than four years since we first called for an online registry, and there are at least 26 other recommendations that the government's own Citizens Panel on Increasing Organ Donations recommended in March 2007.

While the government delays, one person dies every three days while on that wait-list here in Ontario. But it doesn't have to be that way. I call once again on the McGuinty government to make organ donation a priority. Simply sending out social media messages and press releases about the importance of organ donation falls far short of the government's responsibility on this important issue.

The 1,500 patients on that wait-list for an organ transplant, thousands more in need of tissue transplants, their families and friends want to know when this government will do more than pay lip service to the importance of organ and tissue donation.

When can we expect to see an online registry, and when will we see a commitment to implementing the recommendations of the government's own citizens panel?

HAMLET OF VANDORF

Ms. Helena Jaczek: On Sunday, April 10, 2011, I had the privilege of volunteering at the Whitchurch-Stouff-

ville Museum pancake and ham brunch. This year, it was held at the Vandorf Community Centre, as the museum is undergoing a major expansion through the Building Canada fund. When complete, there will be an additional 9,000 square feet of programming space, which will provide an enhanced setting for community functions.

Vandorf is a small hamlet founded in the 19th century by the Van Nostrand family. In fact, the name Vandorf comes from combining "Van" from Van Nostrand with "dorf," meaning "village" in Dutch, to honour the predominantly Dutch residents of the day. The founding families of Vandorf travel from far and wide to revisit the Vandorf community to support the local museum by attending this delicious event hosted by the Founding Friends of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum.

With Florence White and Krista Rauchenstein at the griddles, ably assisted by Grace Cook, Margaret Crisson, Mary-Anne Pearce, Kathy Amenta, Jeanne Preston, Nora Richardson, Amja Karpapa and Roy Scott, guests enjoyed fresh-cooked pancakes and ham topped off with local maple syrup.

Museum staff Dorie Billich and Stephanie Foley ensured that all ran smoothly, while Rick Preston reminisced about the old days in Vandorf with the visitors. Student volunteers Michela Prefontaine, Sarah Zhao, Irina Sverdichenko and Shirley Hoang were also there.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize all their hard work and dedication, and congratulate the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum on another successful event.

ISABEL BASSETT

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today to recognize a former member of this Legislature, Isabel Bassett, who is being honoured next week at the sixth annual Women in Public Life luncheon as she receives the EVE Equal Voice Award.

Isabel has led a distinguished career, which began in teaching. She moved on to become a journalist for the Toronto Telegram newspaper, and then joined Toronto's first privately owned television broadcast station, CFTO-TV. Isabel was elected to serve the riding of St. Andrew-St. Patrick in 1995, and in 1997 she was appointed the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation.

Isabel is well known for her commitment to the cultural community. As minister, she introduced bills to reduce red tape and simplify processes for the many actors, writers and publishers in the arts community. After her political career, Isabel went on to serve as the chair and CEO of TVO.

Isabel now devotes most of her time to speaking, lobbying and campaigning on behalf of women's issues. She also is an active volunteer for many organizations, including the Dalhousie Advisory Council, the Huntsville Hospital Foundation capital campaign, the International Women's Federation, and Moving Beyond Prejudice, an anti-discrimination education initiative, just to name a few.

Isabel is a wonderful advocate for the election of more women in government, and her advice and guidance were

significant to me when I was seeking election in 2007. I look forward to celebrating with Isabel as she receives her much-deserved EVE Equal Voice award next week.

THOMAS BAITZ

Mr. Jim Brownell: I rise in the House today to congratulate and pay tribute to Dr. Thomas Baitz, from my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, who was recently recognized with the Glenn Sawyer Award from the Ontario Medical Association. This award is presented to physicians for their outstanding medical contributions to their communities. It is given to no more than 15 physicians in the province of Ontario each year.

The Cornwall Academy of Medicine nominated Dr. Baitz for his dedication, hard work and accomplishments in the Cornwall community and, indeed, throughout the counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry.

Some of the initiatives Dr. Baitz has launched in the Cornwall area include a diabetes clinic and dialysis centre. He has also championed the local sleep clinic, instigated weekly educational opportunities for physicians, and established nuclear medicine in the city of Cornwall.

Dr. Baitz is a strong advocate for getting more general physicians into the Cornwall area. He believes the way to attract them is to set up clinics in the region, which would take care of the administrative work and allow doctors to practise without the hassle of operational details. With our new Seaway Valley health centre in Cornwall, we see this happening.

I would like to congratulate Dr. Baitz on receiving the Glenn Sawyer Award from the Ontario Medical Association. I know that I join all constituents in congratulating him for his outstanding health care professional work and for his dedication to the community of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

MILTON DISTRICT HOSPITAL

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Milton, Ontario, is currently the fastest-growing community in Canada. Identified as an urban centre in Ontario's Places to Grow strategy, Milton is expected to grow to 133,000 people by 2016.

Today, with a population of over 100,000, Milton residents are being forced to use a hospital with inadequate bed capacity, emergency room capacity, ICU capacity and obstetrics capacity, and with serious surgical challenges.

Above and beyond these growing capacity concerns is the hospital's aging infrastructure. In a letter encouraging the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to move the Milton hospital capital planning process forward, Mississauga Halton LHIN chair John Magill noted in 2009: "It is critical that the redevelopment of the Milton hospital be considered a high priority of the ministry capital planning process. The current facilities are exhausted, outdated and undersized and cannot accommodate current patient volumes or future hospital service

needs.... The current Milton hospital is incapable of supporting modern-day services...."

Yet, two years later there has been no action. While this government says they support the LHINs, they have ignored this urgent call from the Mississauga Halton LHIN and Milton residents. Yet again, the Liberal walk does not follow the Liberal talk. As a result, not only is money being diverted away from front-line health care to the LHIN, but the health of Milton residents is being put in jeopardy.

Again, I urge this government to take the concerns of my constituents more seriously and move to the next phase—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

ONTARIO SPORT AWARDS

Mr. Rick Johnson: Last week, Ontarians had an opportunity to celebrate a year of sports achievement like no other in our province's history. This past Thursday, the Ontario Sport Awards brought together athletes, coaches, business partners and sport organizations under one roof. The event recognized those who made serious achievements within their sport and who contributed to its development.

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Among them was Summer Mortimer, who brought home the female disabled athlete of the year award. Summer won gold at the IPC world championships and broke numerous world records all year long.

A packed house at the awards event helped mark an exceptional year in sport history, not only in Ontario but across Canada. The year 2010 also gave us a chance to watch our homegrown athletes bring home the greatest results in Canada's Olympic history. Awards were not only given to athletes, but to those in supporting roles like coaches and sport organizations.

The tireless efforts of individuals who dedicated up to two years of their lives to help organize local events did not go unrecognized. The event also celebrated the communities who play host to the many matches and tournaments Ontario hosts each year. Included last Thursday was recognition for Haliburton county, from my riding, which did a splendid job hosting the 2011 seniors' winter games this past February.

The sport awards were a great opportunity to showcase the remarkable sporting talent in this province, and I congratulate all those involved.

FIRE HALL IN ESTAIRE WANUP

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to make you aware of a great injustice presently taking place in my riding. It is in regard to Estaire Wanup, one of the many unorganized areas of Nickel Belt, and their volunteer fire brigade.

You see, Estaire Wanup is built on both sides of Highway 69. The fire hall is just beside the highway so that the trucks can go on and get to where they're going quickly. Now comes the new Highway 400, and they lose

their entrance. We now have a fire hall on a dead end to nowhere.

Those 200 residents realized that they needed to relocate their fire hall following the rerouting of Highway 69, so they went to work. They successfully secured property with access to the new highway. They have completed the building and the drywalling, and they will be painting shortly. All this was accomplished through their community fundraising efforts, many hours of volunteer labour and the assistance of sympathetic suppliers and contractors. Why? Because their multiple requests to the government for help have gone unanswered.

We have a community of 200 people responsible for raising \$250,000 to build a new fire hall because the government of Ontario has cut their access. This is \$1,250 for every man, woman and child. How can that be, that this community was forced into this situation, asked the government for help, and the government doesn't answer?

They've raised \$190,000; they're short \$60,000. Please help.

NATIONAL TRADE CONTRACTORS COALITION OF CANADA

Mr. Dave Levac: "We're the ones doing the work." That's the rally call. That's the catchphrase of the National Trade Contractors Coalition of Canada, the NTCCC, who work in partnership to bring together the construction trade associations from across the industry and across the country. Their members are engaged in the industrial, commercial, institutional and residential sectors of Canada's construction industry. They are the trade contractors who hire the vast majority of skilled trades workers within the construction industry itself. They are also the trade contractors who are hired by general contractors for specific parts of large construction projects.

The NTCCC is at Queen's Park today for their annual lobby day, meeting MPPs of all parties. The NTCCC is also here to bring us a little bit of fun: They will be hosting a reception today following the sitting. We all know that all members work really hard, so it's always nice at the end of the day to kick back and relax with those wonderful workers. What better way than to join me and the members of the NTCCC at the NTCCC reception that will be held in the legislative dining room downstairs between 4:30 and 7:30?

These men and women build our province. Let's show them a little support. I hope to see you there.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: The Minister of Energy announced last week that in the first months of 2011, Ontario's use of coal-fired power generation was down 90% compared to the same period in 2003.

The McGuinty government recognizes the benefits of phasing out dirty coal, and we're well on our way to shutting down all coal generation by 2014. That's like

taking seven million cars off the road. In the process, we're creating a new world-leading industry that's giving thousands of Ontarians good jobs, and most importantly, we're protecting the health of our children and grandchildren.

Compare this to the record under the previous government, where the use of coal skyrocketed more than 127%. At that time, the Ontario Medical Association estimated that coal plants were causing the deaths of 2,300 Ontarians every year.

Now the PCs want to turn back to the old days, promising to halt the growth of the new clean energy industry and fire up the coal furnaces to fill the gap. The only energy plan they've shown is their plan to shut down the agency responsible for conservation and planning, and while they are happy to help their friends in the coal industry, when it comes to helping Ontarians, they turn their backs, voting against taking 10% off the hydro bills for families, farmers and small business owners.

I'm proud to be part of a—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move its adoption.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 163, An Act to amend Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000 / Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi Christopher de 2000 sur le registre des délinquants sexuels.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FIRE PROTECTION AND PREVENTION AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PRÉVENTION ET LA PROTECTION CONTRE L'INCENDIE

Mr. Sousa moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 181, An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 181, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la prévention et la protection contre l'incendie.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'll make my statement during ministerial statements.

RADON AWARENESS AND PREVENTION ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LA SENSIBILISATION AU RADON ET LA PROTECTION CONTRE L'INFILTRATION DE CE GAZ

Mr. Moridi moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 182, An Act to raise awareness about radon, provide for the Ontario Radon Registry and reduce radon levels in dwellings and workplaces / *Projet de loi 182, Loi visant à sensibiliser le public au radon, à prévoir la création du Registre des concentrations de radon en Ontario et à réduire la concentration de ce gaz dans les logements et les lieux de travail.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Reza Moridi: The bill enacts the Radon Awareness and Prevention Act, 2011, and amends the Building Code Act, 1992, with respect to radon. The act provides for the establishment of the Ontario radon registry and requires radon measurement specialists and laboratories to provide the registry with specific information.

The minister is required to educate the public about radon and to encourage homeowners to measure the radon levels in their homes and take remedial action, if necessary. The minister is also required to ensure that the radon level in every provincially owned dwelling is measured, and that remedial action is taken, if necessary. Similarly, owners of enclosed workplaces are required to ensure that the radon level in an enclosed workplace is measured and that remedial action is taken, if necessary. The Building Code Act, 1992, is amended to provide authority for regulations that require buildings to be constructed in a way that minimizes radon entry and facilitates post-construction radon removal.

The minister is required to review those requirements within five years after the day the Radon Awareness and Prevention Act, 2011, comes into force.

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STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

FIREFIGHTERS

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'm happy to rise today to introduce a bill to enact labour and employment amendments

to part IX of the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997.

I believe all members of this House will join me in expressing our deepest gratitude to the firefighters of this province. We're joined today by Mark McKinnon and Fred LeBlanc of the OPFFA. Welcome. And to all the firefighters who are watching, we want to say thank you for the important work that you do. When others rush out, they rush in. Our firefighters safeguard our families, our homes and our businesses. They do it bravely and professionally, with leadership and courage.

Speaker, you will recall that on March 10, 2011, a motion brought forward by our colleague the member of Algoma-Manitoulin was passed in this House unanimously. That motion read as follows: "That, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, in recognition of the role Ontario's firefighters play every day in keeping our communities safe, and in recognition of the evidence of health and safety risks to firefighters over the age of 60, and in keeping with the recent Human Rights Tribunal decisions, calls on the government to introduce legislation allowing for the mandatory retirement of firefighters who are involved in fire suppression activities in the province of Ontario."

In response to this motion, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and I asked our ministries to begin discussions with the fire sector. As a result, staff sat down with firefighter stakeholders to discuss two ongoing issues concerning our salaried firefighters. The first issue is mandatory retirement, and the second deals with the duty of fair representation.

When we looked at the question of mandatory retirement for firefighters, we learned a great deal about our current practices across Ontario. First, we learned that the average retirement age for salaried firefighters in Ontario is 57. We also found that approximately two thirds of the collective agreements in the fire sector have a provision setting a retirement age of either 60 or 65.

We know that firefighters work under unique conditions. Their work is extremely physical and unpredictable, and they often perform their duties under stressful and demanding conditions. In part because of these reasons, human rights tribunals have generally found mandatory retirement policies to be a bona fide occupational requirement.

In light of these facts, we feel it important to bring greater clarity to the issue of mandatory retirement in the fire sector. Our proposed legislation, if passed, would allow a mandatory retirement age of not lower than 60 years for firefighters regularly assigned to fire suppression duties unless it is otherwise set out in a collective agreement. Should a provision not be expressed in a collective agreement outlining mandatory retirement, or if there is a provision requiring retirement earlier than age 60, then it would be deemed to contain a provision for mandatory retirement at age 60. This deeming provision would not occur immediately, but would take effect two years after royal assent if the bill is passed.

When we spoke with stakeholders, we found that this proposed legislation reflects current practice. Our bill

simply brings greater clarity and uniformity to this issue. It would reflect current practice, and acknowledge what is widely accepted: that age 60 is an appropriate age for retirement for full-time, front-line firefighters. It also acknowledges medical evidence that supports retirement from suppression duties at age 60.

The other aspect of our bill addresses the duty of fair representation. Unlike other unionized employees, firefighters cannot take complaints about their bargaining agents' representation to the Ontario Labour Relations Board. In discussing this issue with the parties involved, it became clear that unionized firefighters should have access to the board in the same way as other employees do. Quite clearly, allowing firefighters access to the Ontario Labour Relations Board is a matter of fairness.

This province's firefighters often place themselves in harm's way to protect us, and they deserve our thanks. So on behalf of Minister Bradley and my colleagues in this Legislature, I say to the firefighters of Ontario, thank you for your selflessness, thank you for your dedication and thank you for your service.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I want to address just briefly this bill. But of course, we only saw it for the first time about 15 minutes ago, and I'm going to start with that. I had, and I know many people on this side of the House had, very high expectations for the new Minister of Labour when he took over that portfolio that things wouldn't necessarily be done in the same old way as they had been done previously and that the opposition would be engaged and be provided with timely access to proposed legislation—but, once again, 15 minutes of time to review a piece of legislation. That speaks to, I would say, a dismissiveness of the House, dismissiveness of our democratic process. I really think it plays into and justifies the position that many people have that these pieces of legislation are often just put forward or being used for partisan advantage instead of for the real benefit of the people of society. With that said, I do hope, and I will continue to encourage this minister, that in future bills, he does present them to the opposition in advance and provide for some briefing so that we can have a thoughtful, full discussion on the legislation.

There are a number of pieces in this legislation, in this short, very cursory look at it. How is this going to affect people who are members of the firefighters union but who are in an investigative role or administrative or training roles? How is this legislation going to affect them? There are those who have multiple roles within the fire departments or in some fire departments.

Also, of course, this bill, it appears, applies to every municipal fire department that has a population of greater than 10,000. A population of 10,000—I know a number of fire departments with very small municipal forces are struggling. How is this legislation going to affect them?

One of the things that I've heard from our firefighters that is not in this bill, and it really disappoints me that it isn't, is the length of time for bargaining. It has been said—we've heard it often and over and over—that to get

a collective agreement in place, you're often into the next cycle before you even get the first one finalized. But it doesn't appear that the Minister of Labour has taken any steps or any actions with this piece of legislation to facilitate a more timely and more effective bargaining process so that we can not leave the firefighters hanging for three or four years wondering what they were working for, for the last three years. That's what we're getting right now.

I do know that there's a number of other elements in there. As I said, how is this going to affect people in the investigation roles and whatnot? Also, the minister referred to the motion that was passed by this House that would allow for the mandatory retirement of firefighters in the province at age 60. But again, reading this in this very short period of time, it doesn't look like we're allowing for mandatory retirement, but we're imposing a mandatory retirement.

I'm sure we'll get an opportunity to discuss some of these things when we do have a complete debate and when we've had more than just 15 minutes to review a piece of legislation before the House.

Once again I'll ask the minister to be more cognitive and be a little bit more accommodating to the members of this House, that legislation brought forward in a forthright and honest manner should be brought forward to the opposition in a fashion that we can actually have time to review and provide thoughtful comments on the legislation.

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Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an honour and a privilege to rise and to, first and foremost, say thank you on behalf of our leader, Andrea Horwath, and the New Democratic Party to the firefighters for all that they do. And I want to say a personal thank you because when my husband had a heart attack, guess who was first on the scene? Who knows whether he would have survived or not had firefighters not been there. But we all know in this House, and we all know across this province, that it's usually firefighters who get there first. So I want to thank you for everything you do to save the lives of Ontarians and of my constituents. I also want to thank you for your political presence in this place, because you have brought about some phenomenal changes, changes that are extremely positive.

I haven't seen the entire bill either, but from what I see from the Minister of Labour today, making retirement mandatory at age 60 is something that New Democrats would wholeheartedly support. In fact, we have been asking for it as well on your behalf. The changes allowing you to go before the Ontario Labour Relations Board as well are welcome. They're welcome changes, and we support them as well.

The only concern I can see—and, again, I just had a cursory reading of this, and this is not the bill itself; I'd like to see the bill itself—is the condition that this takes two years to come into effect. Maybe at another time the Minister of Labour can address that concern because, hey, we needed this two years yesterday, not two years

from now. There's no reason that this couldn't be brought in with royal assent quicker than that, and certainly before this House rises. So I would hope that that's an amendment that this minister would see fit to make at committee so that we can get that protection in place for firefighters sooner rather than later.

But suffice it to say that, through the history of the New Democratic Party, we have been fighting for firefighters here—from our leader Andrea Horwath's Bill 111, when she originally started looking at presumed diagnosis, to my bill, which I would respectfully ask the Minister of Labour to look at again, covering presumed diagnosis for post-traumatic stress disorder for front-line workers, which would include firefighters. That's something the police have asked for; it's something paramedics have asked for; it's something firefighters are in agreement with; and it's something that we have asked this government for as well.

We're looking at maybe some broader changes; again, perhaps an amendment to this bill that could be made in committee. Suffice it to say, anything that helps firefighters and helps Ontarians, we in the New Democratic Party are in favour of.

I want to commend the government for bringing this forward. But, more to the point, I commend our firefighters for what they do day in and day out to protect all of us, because that's what they do. And again a personal thanks for protecting my family. Thank you very much.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It gives me great pleasure to rise and read a petition to the Legislative Assembly. I have over 6,000 names on this petition. It was collected in a very short period of time—four weeks—mainly through the hard work of the group that we have in the galleries with us today. I congratulate them once again.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Milton is the fastest-growing community in Canada; and

"Whereas, during the past six years, 60,000 new people have moved to Milton and another 43,000 will be arriving in the next five years; and

"Whereas, over the next two decades, Milton will become the largest community in Halton region and the second-largest in the Mississauga Halton LHIN; and

"Whereas this rapidly expanding community is still served by a hospital that is undersized and outdated in terms of its physical facility and aging infrastructure that was designed and built to serve 30,000 people; and

"Whereas no other hospital in the region, including the new Oakville hospital, has planned to provide core hospital services to Milton and its growing population; and

"Whereas the Milton District Hospital has not received approval for any added service capacity in the past 25 years; and

"Whereas Halton Healthcare Services has developed a responsive plan to address expansion of Milton District Hospital which it shared with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Milton District Hospital expansion project be identified as an urgent and top priority of the province of Ontario's multi-year infrastructure plan and that Milton District Hospital be authorized to move to the functional programming stage of the capital approval process."

I'm very much in favour of this. I'm pleased to sign it and pass it to my page Sydney O'Brien, also from Halton region, and I'm sure she'll be looking forward to taking it to the desk.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Rick Johnson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I agree with this petition, I affix my signature to it and I present it to page Jia Jia.

PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas supported-living residents in southwestern and eastern Ontario were subjected to picketing outside their homes during labour strikes in 2007 and 2009; and

"Whereas residents and neighbours had to endure megaphones, picket lines, portable bathrooms and shining lights at all hours of the day and night on their streets; and

"Whereas individuals with intellectual disabilities and organizations who support them fought for years to break down barriers and live in inclusive communities; and

"Whereas Bill 83 passed second reading in the Ontario Legislature on October 28, 2010;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government quickly schedule hearings for Sylvia Jones's Bill 83, the Protecting Vulnerable People Against Picketing Act, to allow for public hearings."

I obviously support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Madelaine to take to the table.

HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My petition is to support extending the Ombudsman of Ontario's jurisdiction to include the Tarion Warranty Corp.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas homeowners have purchased a newly built home in good faith and often soon find they are victims of construction defects, often including Ontario building code violations, such as faulty heating, ventilation and air conditioning ... systems, leaking roofs, cracked foundations, etc.;

"Whereas often when homeowners seek restitution and repairs from the builder and the Tarion Warranty Corp., they encounter an unwieldy bureaucratic system that often fails to compensate them for the high cost of repairing these construction defects, while the builder often escapes with impunity;

"Whereas the Tarion Warranty Corp. is supposed to be an important part of the consumer protection system in Ontario related to newly built homes;

"Whereas the government to date has ignored calls to make its Tarion agency truly accountable to consumers;

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, support MPP Cheri DiNovo's private member's bill, which calls for the Ombudsman to be given oversight of Tarion and the power to deal with unresolved complaints;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act to provide that the Ombudsman's powers under the Ombudsman Act in respect of any governmental organization apply to the corporation established under the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act, and to provide for necessary modifications in the application of the Ombudsman Act."

I absolutely agree with this. I'm going to give it to Jimmy to be delivered to the clerks.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Kim Craitor: I'm pleased to introduce this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by" my colleague "MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I'm pleased to sign this in support of the bill.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Since nothing's happened in the last few minutes, I think I'll present this petition again.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Milton is the fastest-growing community in Canada; and

"Whereas, during the past six years, 60,000 new people have moved into Milton, and another 43,000 will be arriving in the next five years; and

"Whereas, over the next two decades, Milton will become the largest community in Halton region and the second-largest in the Mississauga Halton LHIN; and

"Whereas this rapidly expanding community is still served by a hospital that is undersized and outdated in terms of its physical facility and aging infrastructure that was designed and built to service less than 30,000 people; and

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"Whereas no other hospital in the region, including the new Oakville hospital, has planned to provide core hospital services to Milton and its growing population; and

"Whereas the Milton District Hospital has not received approval for any added service capacity in the past 25 years; and

"Whereas Halton Healthcare Services has developed a responsive plan to address the expansion of Milton District Hospital, which it shared with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Milton District Hospital expansion project be identified as an urgent and top priority in the province of Ontario's multi-year infrastructure plan, and that Milton District Hospital be authorized to move to the functional programming stage of the capital approval process."

I agree with this petition. I'm glad to affix my signature and pass it to my page, Travis.

PARAMEDICS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

As I agree with this petition, I'll affix my signature to it and send it to the table with page Rafeh.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, signed by a number of people, mostly from Strathroy but also from Sarnia, London and Parkhill. It reads as follows:

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Grace to carry it for me.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all Ontarians have the right to a safe home environment; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario works to reduce all barriers in place that prevent victims of domestic violence from fleeing abusive situations; and

"Whereas the Residential Tenancies Act does not take into consideration the special circumstances facing a tenant who is suffering from abuse; and

"Whereas those that live in fear for their personal safety and that of their children should not be financially penalized for the early termination of their residential leases;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Bill 53, the Escaping Domestic Violence Act, 2010, be adopted so that victims of domestic violence be afforded a mechanism for the early termination of their lease to allow them to leave an abusive relationship and find a safe place for themselves and their children to call home."

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition, affix my signature and send it to the table via page Devon.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Jeff Leal: I want to thank Josh Dyer from Mount Brydges, Ontario, for forwarding this petition to me.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I agree wholeheartedly with this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to our friendly page.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario regarding the Milton District Hospital.

"The Time is Now!

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Milton is the fastest-growing community in Canada; and

"Whereas, during the past six years, 60,000 new people have moved to Milton and another 43,000 will be arriving in the next five years; and

"Whereas, over the next two decades, Milton will become the largest community in Halton region and the second-largest in the Mississauga Halton LHIN; and

"Whereas this rapidly expanding community is still served by a hospital that is undersized and outdated in terms of its physical facility and aging infrastructure that was designed and built to serve 30,000 people; and

"Whereas no other hospital in the region, including the new Oakville hospital, has planned to provide core hospital services to Milton and its growing population; and

"Whereas the Milton District Hospital has not received approval for any added service capacity in the past 25 years; and

"Whereas Halton Healthcare Services has developed a responsive plan to address expansion of Milton District Hospital which it shared with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Milton District Hospital expansion project be identified as an urgent and top priority of the province of Ontario's multi-year infrastructure plan and that Milton District Hospital be authorized to move to the functional programming stage of the capital approval process."

I'm in favour of this petition, and I'm glad to affix my signature and give it to my page Emma.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Reza Moridi: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in serving Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I agree with this petition, put my signature on it and pass it on to page Cherechi.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SECURITIES INDUSTRY

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 13, 2011, on the amendment to the motion by Ms. Broten to locate the new common securities regulator in Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate? The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: I remember those heady days about seven and a half years ago, following the election

of the first Dalton McGuinty government, when Liberals were—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd remind the honourable member about the use of names.

Mr. Michael Prue: The McGuinty government, then. I can't use his first name. I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker.

The McGuinty government—those heady days when they all gathered around the table and thought of wonderful things they were going to do for the province. One of the things was, they called the finance committee to order and everyone sat around the table and talked about how they were going to change the Toronto Stock Exchange, how they were going to make it into Canada's truly unique stock exchange, how they were going to get support from the federal government, how it was going to bring jobs and know-how and technology into Toronto. Seven and a half years have gone by, and another election has gone by, and here we are, debating a motion that's now nine months old and has been resurrected. It's motion number 3. This has been a long time, and absolutely nothing has been done.

I don't know why this has been brought forward today, except that it's probably so much filler, because the government has run out of things they want or need to say, and because, I guess, of some procedural manoeuvrings by the official opposition. The bill they wanted to bring in today hasn't been allowed, so now we have this filler, and they're going to talk again about the same things they said seven and a half years ago, with probably as equal the conviction they had then. It all sounds very nice: Let's have a stock exchange in Toronto, let's do the right thing, let's rah-rah that this is the financial capital of Ontario—and do very little, because in the seven and a half years, virtually nothing has been accomplished by this government in bringing the stock exchange, Canada's stock exchange, home to Toronto. There's been very little in the way of negotiations with the federal government. There's been very little negotiations with the other provinces. Some of the provinces still stand opposed, and in fact nothing at all has happened.

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Quebec and British Columbia are still opposed. There is absolutely no movement on their part. I do hear the federal finance minister from time to time stand up and talk about the need for this exchange. But today, wonder of wonders, after all this time, after seven and a half years of dithering, we now have the motion brought back. Isn't it instructive that, in the last couple of weeks, there have been ongoing meetings in this place, people talking not about the national securities regulator, not about making the Toronto Stock Exchange the pre-eminent stock exchange in Canada, but in fact all the talk is about the merger of the Toronto Stock Exchange with the larger London Stock Exchange, the TSX and the LSE merger.

That's the real issue here today. The real issue isn't about having Toronto as Canada's national stock exchange. The real issue that is confronting the people of this province and this country is what the government is going to do in the face of a merger. We know what other

countries have done. We know that when Australia was faced with the same circumstance—to be taken over by the Singapore stock exchange—the government of that country and the Premiers of those provinces in Australia stood in unison and said, “Over our dead body.” They were not going to let that happen.

But I don't think that's what's happening here. I think in this province and in this country, there are people who are willing to sell out our national securities regulator. They're willing to sell out the sovereignty of Canadians. They're willing to sell out a stock exchange that is world-renowned for its mining stocks and its resource base. That would be a very sad day for Canadians. It would be a very sad day for Ontario because of the loss of expertise that would flow from both of them.

I don't know why this government has brought this forward today, but I do think it's passing strange. I did read an article in the *Toronto Star* this morning, when I woke up and opened it up. On the *Insight* page there's a very good article by a well-known Liberal, who's talking about this very event that is taking place, about the very event that this government is a part of within this Legislature, and that is, to suggest that the merger is the right thing. This very good Liberal said that it was a mistake, that this government ought not to be going down that road with a sell-off or a merger with the larger London Stock Exchange.

I don't know what's happened in the committees, because things are pretty tight-lipped, and all I know is what I read in the newspapers, because obviously a government member or members leaked to the *Toronto Star* what the reports are likely to say. We know that there is a fairly broad consensus between government members and those in the official opposition to recommend, with conditions—and I have no idea what they are—that Ontario approve of the merger and to send that to the national government and say that Ontario has no objections, provided that certain conditions are met in the long term. Again, I know from the same newspaper—because my own colleague the member from Timmins—James Bay, who served on that committee as the lone NDP representative, has stated that he will be writing a dissenting report.

Therefore, I don't know why this is being debated. I had to stand up because perhaps a government member, after I sit down, can tell me why this has been brought forward again, after nine months, to be debated here today, why it has been brought forward when government members seem to be on board with the merger with the London Stock Exchange, which would virtually destroy the autonomy of Canada's largest stock exchange and a single regulator, which was a dream that was bright and bushy all those seven and a half years ago when we sat around the table.

What is this motion doing here? I haven't the slightest clue. But I do know that this motion that is coming before us today, even should it pass, is too late, because once this report is released—and I do believe it's going to be released this week—then all of this is for naught,

because we will no longer be looking at one securities regulator in Toronto for all of Canada; we will be looking at a securities regulator based in London, England, that will, from this point on, tell Canadians—the stock market, the resource sector and everything else—exactly how high they have to jump.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Seeing none, on March 24, 2010, Ms. Broten moved “that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario endorses the need for a strong national securities regulator and endorses the Open Ontario plan to grow our financial services industry by calling on the federal government to recognize Toronto's role as the third-largest financial centre in North America and therefore locate the new common securities regulator in Toronto, where it belongs.”

Mr. Miller, Parry Sound–Muskoka, then moved that the motion be amended by deleting the words “endorses the Open Ontario plan to grow our financial services industry by calling” and substituting therefor the word “calls.”

We will deal first with Mr. Miller's amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House that the amendment carry?

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

I believe the nays have it.

We will call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The government House leader has requested that, pursuant to standing order 28(h), the vote on government order 3 be deferred until deferred votes on April 19, 2011.

Vote deferred.

STRONG COMMUNITIES THROUGH AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 FAVORISANT DES COLLECTIVITÉS FORTES GRÂCE AU LOGEMENT ABORDABLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 14, 2011, on the motion for third reading of Bill 140, An Act to enact the Housing Services Act, 2011, repeal the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 140, Loi édictant la Loi de 2011 sur les services de logement, abrogeant la Loi de 2000 sur la réforme du logement social et apportant des modifications corrélatives et autres à d'autres lois.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): The member from Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a privilege and honour, again, to speak on behalf of Ontarians, and particularly to speak on behalf of all of the affordable housing activists across this province that came and deputed—I think some thousand hours' worth before this government—about the unbelievable growing need for affordable housing in this province.

We now have, just to put these frightening numbers out there, about 142,000 families who are waiting aver-

ages of 10 to 12 or more years for affordable housing; 70,000 families in the greater Toronto area alone.

This was at one point called a national disaster; it's now very much an Ontario disaster. Certainly in Ontario about 50% of all renters pay more than 50% of their income on rent. We all know how unaffordable most housing is now in our municipalities, particularly, of course, in Toronto, where it's exceptionally high and where it's almost impossible for a young couple to think of going into the real estate market and buying a house, unless they have exceptionally good jobs and two of them.

1400

I remark that this has changed dramatically since the days in which I grew up in this province. There was a time when, on one salary, you could afford a house, a car in the driveway and—those lucky ones—a cottage as well. Those times have gone; they've gone. Now we're in a situation, unforeseen in those days, of homelessness—thousands of people living on our streets—and quite frankly there's no excuse for it.

The excuse for it is the inaction of this government. This government likes to say it has a good record on housing. I beg to differ. In fact, we have the worst record on investment in housing of all the provinces across Canada. We spend less than half per capita on housing than any other province. In fact, Saskatchewan, as an example, spends four times as much as we do per capita on housing for their citizens.

Most of the money that we have spent comes from the federal government. We in the New Democratic Party fought for it there. Prime Minister Stephen Harper acknowledged that, and money kept flowing, amazingly. But that's going to dry up. The situation is not going to get any better; it's going to get worse with the lack of government action.

I wanted to make two points, in my hour lead, that you will not and cannot forget: Number one, this government, the government of Ontario, the McGuinty government, is now in official breach of United Nations human rights conventions, and there is a letter to that effect which I will include and read into the record; and number two, this so-called housing bill doesn't have one new dollar, one new rent supplement, one new unit or any provisional changes, like inclusionary zoning or changes to the Planning Act, that would allow municipalities to fill in. There's no housing in this so-called housing bill, and this government is now in official breach because of it.

This is a letter that was sent by a representative of the special rapporteur from the United Nations to this government. He wrote directly to Minister Bartolucci and said, "I am writing to you as the former UN special rapporteur on adequate housing." I'm going to skip along:

"I am writing with respect to Bill 140"—it's not every day that the United Nations takes an interest in a provincial housing bill, but they have here—"which I understand is currently being reviewed by the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, with a number of important amendments under consideration. I am particularly interested in amendments that incorporate some key recom-

mendations from my report," and, I would add, not only from the United Nations report but from every single housing advocate that came before us, representing some 450 organizations across Ontario and thousands of individuals.

He continues, "I gather these" amendments "have been supported by a wide range of civil society organizations and experts," as I've just said, "and have been tabled by MPP DiNovo for the consideration of the standing committee.

"As you are aware, Minister Bartolucci, a central focus of my concerns and recommendations addressed the need for ... provincial housing strategies, based on legislative recognition of the right to adequate housing."

He goes on to recommend:

"—prioritize the needs of groups most vulnerable to homelessness and discrimination, including women, aboriginal people and people with disabilities;

"—include firm goals and timetables for the elimination of homelessness and the realization of the right to adequate housing;

"—provide for independent monitoring and review of progress and provide for consideration of complaints of violations of the right to adequate housing; and

"—ensure meaningful follow-up to concerns and recommendations from UN human rights bodies...."

"I trust that your government will give due consideration to these critical amendments and that they can be incorporated into the final version Bill 140. They are, in my view, critical to ensuring compliance with Ontario's obligations under international human rights law to fully ensure the right to adequate housing."

He concludes, "I also intend to keep my colleague Raquel Rolnik, the current special rapporteur on adequate housing, informed of these developments...."

These are strong words from an international body. These are strong words directed at the McGuinty government, directed at the committee. But sadly, the words of 450 organizations representing housing advocates across the province of Ontario and the words of the United Nations special rapporteur have been ignored, and all 49 of our amendments were voted down, with the exception of one, which was a wording change.

Sometimes one has to marvel that all of that time spent giving submissions to this government, telling this government what the province needs, all of them remarkably similar—I'll go over the five strategic necessities that not only would put this government back in compliance with human rights legislation universally but also would satisfy every submitter as well; five tests, and I'll go through them.

But first of all, suffice to say that this is not just myself and the United Nations here. These are some of the responses from some of our housing advocates. Here's what the Housing Network of Ontario says: "The Ontario government has proposed some new legislation and administrative procedures that are useful ... but the essential items for a long-term affordable housing plan—targets, timeline, and, most of all, funding over a multi-

year period—are” all “missing. It’s like they’ve put up the scaffolding, but then forgot to give the workers the tools that they need to get the job done.”

Here’s another one: “By the end of this fiscal year, capital funding for new affordable housing is set to shrink to zero. Investment in building new homes and repairing existing rundown housing not only helps the people living in that housing, but also provides a solid boost to the economy, including jobs and even additional tax revenue for the government.”

This is how short-sighted it is. Investment in housing, unlike corporate tax giveaways, actually produces jobs. Investment in infrastructure produces jobs, not giveaways to already profitable banks.

This government promised in 2003, when they were elected, that they would build 20,000 units, new builds, of affordable housing. Here we are, eight years later, two elections later, and we’re barely at 14,000 or 15,000, and, depending on the way you classify affordable housing, it could be argued that many even of those units are not truly affordable to the people who need them most.

I talked about my own circumstance: a teenager living on student welfare, who was homeless for a period, and how, back in the day, when that was my situation, I could actually afford to rent a basement apartment and put myself through school on student welfare. Those days are long, long gone. Now imagine if you are on Ontario disabilities and earning around \$1,000 a month: Good luck. Remember, you’re on Ontario disabilities for a reason: You can’t work; you have a disability. You also cannot afford to pay rent and live in the city of Toronto. Is that really what we want to say to those who are disabled—that you should live in dire poverty because of a disability? That’s essentially what this government is saying to them with their lack of action. That’s why it has garnered the attention of the United Nations.

If you’re living on welfare, it’s even worse. A single person gets just over \$500 a month. Try to live on just over \$500 a month—impossible, in the city of Toronto. We all know that. That’s where our homelessness comes from.

What’s really quite frightening and staggering is that it actually costs more to the taxpayer to keep somebody homeless than to house them. I remember when Mr. Gerretsen was the Minister of Housing, when I was newly elected. I was before him on government agencies, asking questions, and he admitted into Hansard that it’s true, that it costs more to keep somebody on the streets, in shelters, in emergency wards, in prisons, than it does to actually provide them with shelter. In fact, he said that you could probably put them in a motel or a hotel per night. It costs about \$40,000 to \$50,000 a year to keep somebody homeless in the city.

So it’s not about the money. It’s about the political will, and there is clearly no political will to provide housing for the homeless on behalf of the McGuinty government. That’s what this bill says. It has a nice title, of course, and it moves an inch forward. As that wonderful quote says, it puts the scaffolding up, but no home. It

makes a step. It had all of the submissions but no action in really providing one new unit, one new rent supplement, one new dollar—not even a hint. That’s what we have here.

Every organization—from the nurses’ organization, Doris Grinspun, ACORN and others—all came before the McGuinty government and all asked for five key actions. They all asked for what the UN rapporteur asked for, which were targets, timelines and, most of all, funding. They asked for provisions, too. One of their asks—all of them—was that the move to privatize existing affordable housing be stopped, and we know it’s going on. There are some 47 properties right now before the city of Toronto that are being considered for privatization by the city’s new administration, and yet this government seems quite happy to walk in lockstep with that move.

1410

Certainly some of the protections that were asked for by the co-op federation are not in this bill, some that would keep co-op housing within the co-op sector. In fact, we should make it easier to start a co-op; easier to start non-profit housing of any sort. Again, these were asked for. Again, special consideration was asked for by the advocate for youth in the province of Ontario, for crown wards who, by law, at the age of 18 are kicked out of whatever home they’re living in—kicked out onto the street. How do you expect an 18-year-old, probably with post-traumatic stress disorder, which many of our crown wards suffer from, kicked out of the homes that they’ve known, to survive? Certainly they don’t have the luxury I had back in the day when you could live on what they called “student welfare,” when you could live on welfare in the city of Toronto. That’s not the case anymore.

They asked—because they were here before the committee with moving stories about the problems of waiting for them. They can’t wait. They should be in school. They shouldn’t be on affordable housing wait-lists. Neither, of course, should victims of domestic violence. Neither, of course, as we heard from one of the submissions, should seniors. Imagine if you’re a senior and you’re in need of affordable housing. You don’t have 10 or 12 years to wait for that unit to come up.

So these groups ask for some priority, but the sad reality is, even with priority—and we all have these cases in our constituency offices. I know we do. They come to see us and they say, “I’ve been waiting for five, seven years. Can’t you do something?” We do everything we can. We write letters. We make sure that all the i’s are dotted and the t’s crossed on their application. Of course, we make sure that they’ve applied far and wide for every available unit, but we know there’s simply not enough housing.

I also talked about how other jurisdictions do it better, and just about everybody does right now, by the way. As I said, we have the worst record in Canada as it stands. Even jurisdictions in the States, where states are going bankrupt, they have brought in changes to their planning code so that inclusionary zoning can be part of the mix, so that, without spending one tax dollar, one can require

of developers who develop large sites that they set aside some of those units for affordable housing. In a down market it's actually good for developers to do that. None of that is in this bill.

Inclusionary zoning amendments to the Planning Act were asked for by just about every single submitter to the committee. So one wonders: Why listen? Why hear from housing activists if you then reject every amendment they put forward? Why listen to them at all? That's what they're asking my office. That's what they're asking me. They're saying, "We just went through this incredible exercise, taking months and months of spending our time and our money," which they need for other purposes, i.e. providing housing. "There we were, committee after committee, meeting after meeting, and at the end of the day"—again, I say it: not one new dollar, not one new rent supplement, not one new unit, and the government is now in official breach of the United Nations human rights laws, as said by the special rapporteur, who took an interest in Bill 140 and made that comment.

Then the government has the audacity, truly, to say to us in opposition, "Well, just don't vote for it." They know, of course, that just by putting "we believe in affordable housing" in the title, one is almost forced to vote for it. Yes, we do believe in affordable housing here in the opposition. Yes, we do think that secondary suites are a good idea. But, my goodness, we're drowning in Ontario; poverty rates are through the roof. We've never seen poverty rates like this in Ontario since the Great Depression. One in six children lives in poverty.

Talk to food bank organizers; talk to those who run them. They'll tell you that it's not only people on social assistance who now are lining up at the food banks; it's people who are working full-time. Why? The single biggest motivation for them to be in that line is because they cannot get affordable housing.

We know—the nurses know; they came and made a submission—that good, affordable housing is the single greatest determinant of health. We know this, and yet, in the face of all this, this government is breaking United Nations human rights law, and we're one of the wealthiest jurisdictions. Let's face it: No matter what serious debt we're in, we're one of the wealthiest jurisdictions in the world, globally speaking, and yet we have attracted the attention of the United Nations to a housing bill in the province of Ontario because of this breach.

Not only should we be ashamed; I stand here in Holy Week, of all weeks, to talk about poverty and housing. We stand here saying that we're all elected to do the right thing, that we're elected to protect those who are marginalized, and yet this government does virtually nothing—virtually nothing. That's what Bill 140 is.

Will we vote for it? Of course we will. Why not? Secondary suites are a good thing. But what we would like to have seen is a housing unit, a rent supplement, a dollar—in fact, they've slashed the housing budget another 10%. We would like to have seen actual, real movement toward providing housing for all those people who need it in the province of Ontario, because it's simply the right thing to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm more than pleased to be able to respond, and I'm delighted that the member from Parkdale–High Park has acknowledged the extensive consultation that, in fact, has gone on, both previous to the introduction of the bill and since.

There have been many comments made about the investment we have or have not made, and let me assure you that the \$2.5-billion investment we have made is extraordinarily significant in comparison to Saskatchewan, which is just over \$200 million; Alberta, which is \$1.5 billion; Quebec, which is \$2 billion; BC, which is \$1 billion; and New Brunswick, which is \$210 million. We have, in fact, invested a very significant amount of money into long-term housing over the last number of years, and we continue to invest some \$400 million every year into both the homelessness and housing programs.

Much has been said about the comments that people are saying, and I'd like to share a few with you as well. This is from the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, Keith Ward: "The government has recognized the strength and contributions that community-based non-profit housing providers make in helping Ontarians meet their housing needs."

We go on to Paul Johnson, director, Neighbourhood Development Strategies, city of Hamilton: "This new funding flexibility will assist communities to deliver high-impact investments that maximize the resources available."

The president of the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association, David Rennie: "This strategy articulates the province's recognition of the importance of strong partnership and collaboration with municipalities in the area of housing."

From the Metcalf Foundation, John Stapleton: "The reform on rent-geared-to-income brings Ontario and its municipalities to the 21st century...."

"We applaud the clear" thinking and the "link the strategy makes between housing and the needs of the people who live in it, which is an important step in addressing poverty and homelessness...." That's from Roger Maloney, Social Housing Services Corporation.

There is no question that our consultation has worked, and we've included this in—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Thank you. The member for Whitby–Oshawa.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I did listen very carefully to the comments that were made by my colleague the member from Parkdale–High Park. I have to say that I agree with her: When it comes to the end of the day with respect to Bill 140, there's just really not much there. It doesn't really do anything to advance the cause of providing affordable housing here in the province of Ontario.

1420

We're going to support it because there are a couple of things there that we can be in support of. We do believe, with respect to the secondary suites, that that is a good

move that's been taken with this. But other than that, there's really no new money, other than to continue to rely on the feds to bail them out. This government always looks to the feds to do the work for them.

When you look at some of the issues that we're faced with in our ridings, in our community offices each and every day, and when we have constituents come in and tell us that they need affordable housing, particularly those people who are trying to live on ODSP, and to have to look them in the eye and tell them that they're on the list and it will probably be six to 10 years before they get reached—I'm embarrassed to say that to people. It's ridiculous. We should not have that in the province of Ontario—to have people who need a place to live, people who are trying to live on less than \$1,000 a month. I can't imagine how that happens in Toronto, because in my own riding of Whitby–Oshawa, it's barely affordable when people are paying something like \$750 a month on rent. They have to pay market rent because they can't get subsidized or supported housing, and that means that they end up having to go to a food bank at the end of the month. It's simple math, dollars and cents. There's no money left to be able to provide a family with the other essentials that they need. They're struggling with increasing energy bills and other costs that have been passed on to them by the McGuinty Liberals.

So we need to really get on with this and not just pass a piece of legislation that has no teeth and especially no money behind it. We need to do a lot better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: I stand to salute the member from Parkdale–High Park. She always stands up here and speaks intelligently, but mostly, passionately, about the things in which she believes.

She talked about the lack of targets. There are no targets for building housing in this bill. That is perhaps because the government, which set targets many years ago—again, back to those heady days seven and a half years ago when they promised that 20,000 units of housing would be built each and every year under a McGuinty government. They still haven't built 20,000 units in eight years.

She spoke about the lack of money and the fact that there isn't one new dollar being put into this housing bill that would actually see the provision of affordable housing come to the fore and something actually be built.

She talked about the violation that Ontario now finds itself in under the UN charter. I think we should be ashamed in Ontario, where we have been named by a rapporteur from the United Nations for failing to meet the basic necessities of the people of this province. No government could possibly be proud of that, and I would trust that the members opposite aren't proud of this at all.

She spoke about the social housing sell-offs and what is happening here in the city of Toronto and how disastrous that's going to be not only for the people on the waiting list but immediately for those 47 families who will find themselves on the streets.

She talked about the 49 amendments that were made by the NDP in opposition to the bill, only to see them all shot down—and what kind of consultation was that all about?

She concluded by talking about the plight of the poor in this province and how difficult it is for all of them to make ends meet, especially when it comes to housing.

This is a bill that could have been so much more than it was, and I commend her for bringing those facts out.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Questions and comments?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'm delighted to have an opportunity to speak ever so briefly on the long-term affordable housing strategy, Bill 140.

I would like to remind the member for Whitby–Oshawa that she may want to speak to her predecessor from Whitby–Oshawa about their record during the previous eight years, when they did not build one housing unit in my riding. Since we've been in office, we've built 170, and I can tell you exactly where each one of them is, and I can tell you that they're all full and that our people in Nipissing are very happy that we're back in the business of providing affordable housing.

I would also note that the federal government used to have responsibility for housing and has ceded that territory. Now you're saying somehow that the federal government is responsible for the \$2.5-billion investment we've made.

We've invested in affordable housing in Corbeil, in Astorville, in Mattawa, and in North Bay at a variety of locations, including Trout Lake Road, Commercial Street and at Castle Arms III. All of these homes are providing affordable housing—mostly to our seniors—which was very, very needed in our community.

In Mattawa, they're co-located on the same site as the Algonquin Nursing Home. I'd just like to give a little shout-out to Mrs. Isabelle Rainville, who turned 93 last week at the Algonquin Nursing Home. We call her the queen. She's a lovely, lovely woman. I didn't have a chance to talk to her last week, so I'm saying happy birthday to her in case she's watching today.

Mr. Jeff Leal: How's her bridge game?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I think it's in good shape, actually, her bridge game.

I know that all of our senior housing is much appreciated. I know that we've made substantial investments. I've talked to our poverty activists at home who feel that we've really moved the bar on our poverty reduction strategy as a government. I know that Lana Mitchell at LIPI in North Bay is doing some fantastic work on the ground with those living at the poverty level and is doing a great deal of work with the rent supplement and the other programs that we have put in place and that we are supporting as we assist those living in difficult circumstances.

Certainly, we all agree that housing is important in our communities. I'm delighted to be part of a government that has seen fit to invest and to come up with a strategy for the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): The member for Parkdale–High Park has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thanks to all who took part in this debate. To my friend across the way from Etobicoke, the parliamentary assistant, I have to say that you have to compare apples with apples. To say the total dollar amount is absolutely not fair, especially for small communities. The fact is, per capita, we spend less than half as much as any other province—less than half. Saskatchewan spends four times as much per capita; it's the only reasonable way of comparing.

Also, yes, government members, you listened to housing activists across the province, but you didn't hear them. You didn't act. That's from my friend from Beaches–East York, who commented on that. The Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association said specifically that this bill “does not address the critical need for increased investment in new development.” That's a quote from ONPHA, the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, and I could give you hundreds just like it. All five asks from all of the housing groups were denied. That's the simple reality of this government's consultation and reaction to the bill.

In terms of actually providing housing and the comment from the government House leader, wasn't it Jean Chrétien who killed housing in this country? If memory serves, he was a Liberal. That's how that played out. We have to remember history, or we're doomed to repeat it. Clearly, there's a lot of very revisionist history going on at Queen's Park today.

Let's just keep our history straight. Let's keep our facts straight. Let's at least walk into this bill with our eyes wide open. It is what it is, and it ain't very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on Bill 140, the long-term affordable housing strategy.

I am very pleased to speak about this particular bill. This is the first government in Ontario's history to have a long-term affordable housing strategy. I've been following the evolution and the creation of this bill, from the consultation process to the whole policy development work and then the debate in this House, very closely for a very important reason. That is that affordable housing is an important issue for all the communities. In particular, it's a very important issue in my riding of Ottawa Centre.

This is an issue that, when I ran for the first time in 2007, I spoke a lot about, wanting to ensure that we have more affordable housing in the riding of Ottawa Centre. I will speak a little bit as to the kind of progress we have made in Ottawa Centre when it comes to provision of new affordable housing and also in terms of repairing existing affordable housing and the kind of unique things we are doing in Ottawa Centre as a result of investment that has been made by this government in affordable housing and providing care for those who need the most help, like the chronically homeless and those with addic-

tion challenges, ensuring that, for the first time, they have a permanent roof over their heads. It's an issue that is extremely important, I am sure, to all of us in our communities, but particularly an issue that I have been working very closely on since I was first elected almost four years ago to this Legislature.

1430

As I said, I've been following this debate very closely. I've been following the debate today. I do want to put some key statistics, some key numbers, some key facts on the table, because I think it's only fair that we have that information with us. In Ontario in the last seven years, from 2003 through 2009, we have seen significant investment in affordable housing. We are talking about an investment of over \$2.5 billion. When you compare that to investments made in other provinces, that investment in Ontario is not crumbs. It is a significant investment.

New Brunswick has invested, in the same period, just over \$210 million towards housing. In British Columbia, their investment has been just over \$1 billion towards affordable housing, in Quebec, a little under \$2 billion; in Alberta, \$1.5 billion, approximately; in Saskatchewan, just over \$200 million. But in Ontario, we have seen an investment of \$2.5 billion. In fact, in the last two years, due to the recession, we saw an even more enhanced, concerted devotion to affordable housing and an investment of \$1.2 billion. Surely that is not crumbs, especially if you ask those who are looking for housing, especially those who advocate for affordable housing; like many organizations in my community in Ottawa Centre. An investment of \$1.2 billion across the province was surely not crumbs but a significant investment.

If you look at the previous government and the kind of investments, or lack thereof, they were making in affordable housing, their minister at that time said that the provincial government should not be in the business of affordable housing; that they were going to get out of that particular business. They were actually responsible for downloading that responsibility to the municipalities. It's interesting, because we have heard the same catchphrase from the same folks now who occupy the government on Parliament Hill, saying that the federal government is no longer in the business of affordable housing; that somehow it's only the responsibility of the province and the municipalities to look after affordable housing, as opposed to all of us, all three levels of government, working collectively to ensure that we have more affordable housing available to those who are deserving.

Then the previous government, the Harris-Hudak government, went on and started cutting investments from affordable housing. As we've heard again and again and again, in their eight years of government, no new affordable housing was built in this province: a shameful episode in our history. We need to ensure that we continue to work and reverse that.

What have we done in the last seven or eight years in terms of investing \$2.5 billion in the housing sector? The result is 22,000 new affordable housing builds in the

province of Ontario and well over 240,000 repairs to existing stock. We have to remember: A lot of the affordable housing was built 20 or 25 or 30 years ago. Like any infrastructure, this build is starting to show age, and we have to make sure that we continue to repair those particular buildings—more in terms of making these buildings energy-efficient. I'm going to come back to my riding and the kind of investments we are making to make those buildings more energy-efficient so that housing providers like Ottawa Community Housing, like the Centretown coalition, the CCOC, and like the Cornerstone building, which run and operate these buildings, are able to save money by having energy-efficient buildings and to reinvest that amount of dollars into providing more quality, affordable housing for deserving members in our community.

In the last eight years, we have seen the provision of more than 35,000 rent supplements. The McGuinty government's rent bank program has prevented more than 23,800 evictions—and that's up to January 2011; that number may have gone up—and rate increases have been limited to inflation—a very significant point. This year, the rate increase, according to the rate guideline, was one of the lowest ever in the history of Ontario, at 0.7%. If one looks at the averages between the three parties who have been in government, because I think we have that opportunity to do so in Ontario, the average rent increase under the Liberal government has been 2.05%, the average rate increase under the Tory government was 2.9% and the average rent increase under the NDP was 4.82%. These are some significant variants we're looking at, and the kind of scheme we have in place in terms of pegging rent to inflation under this government has been one of the lowest.

But let me talk about some of the key investments that we have made in Ottawa Centre. I stand here quite proud in terms of the investments we have made just in the last four years since I have been elected and have had the great privilege of serving the good people of Ottawa Centre.

We have actually now built over 250 brand new units in Ottawa Centre, and there are more under construction—over 250 where people are actually living or are about to move in in terms of having that opportunity available to them.

Let me talk about three really important projects in my riding of Ottawa Centre. Shepherds of Good Hope recently bought an old hotel—the building wasn't that old, but it was a great example of how you can leverage existing resources out there—and converted this hotel into 55 units of affordable housing for chronically homeless men. These are men who never had a roof over their head. These are men who had serious addiction problems. They actually became part of a program, run by Shepherds of Good Hope, helping them to manage their addictions. They graduated from that program and for the very first time they were able to have their own home.

This project is called the Oaks. The government invested \$6 million in this project, and here is the amazing

thing about this project: We're breaking down the silos, finally. In this project, we were able to bring the health dollars, the housing dollars, and the community and social services dollars together under one roof to provide services to those 55 men who are starting a new lease on life.

I have now visited that particular project quite a few times in my riding. You can just see the healthy lifestyle, the smiles on people who are living in that project at the Oaks and the difference it is making in turning around their lives because they have this new facility available to them, their own home, and because they have got the health care and the social community services available to them right then and there.

Another very important project is the Beaver Barracks project. It's interesting: Minister Chiarelli, the Minister of Infrastructure, actually kick-started that particular project when he was the regional chair for the Ottawa-Carleton region. Now we're looking at the completion of that project in terms of the building of, in total, 248 units, a mix of bachelor apartments, apartments for people with disabilities and townhouses for larger families.

It's a great project located in the riding of Ottawa Centre. There are two phases. Phase 1 is complete; people have moved in. On phase 2, the construction has just begun. I was there along with Minister Chiarelli two weeks ago, getting a tour of that new residential complex. It's amazing: An investment of \$18.3 million by this government, a significant investment which is resulting in one of the most significant boosts of affordable housing in my riding of Ottawa Centre and roughly about 88 or 90 more units to come in the second phase of that project.

The last project I want to speak about is another project that I worked on from day one, which is provided by Cornerstone Housing for Women. Cornerstone is one of the most unique and incredible organizations, under the leadership of Sue Garvey, which provides affordable housing and shelter for women who are trying to escape situations of sexual violence and domestic violence. We were able to work with Cornerstone and get them \$6.3 million to build 42 units of affordable housing.

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Here's another very unique thing about this particular project: It's going to have a combination of 20 senior women—20 units for senior women—and 22 younger women who have special needs, who have been chronically homeless or who may need special access to special support services, so building that great combination between senior women who need affordable housing and younger women who have other challenges to work through. Once again, this is a great combination of bringing housing dollars, bringing health dollars through the Champlain LHIN—and I want to thank them for partaking in both the Cornerstone project in Ottawa Centre and the Oaks by the Shepherds of Good Hope project—and also bringing community and social services.

On the Cornerstone project, I want to give a big thank you to Minister Madeleine Meilleur for her steadfast

support in terms of making sure that we get the operating dollars necessary to provide the community and social services in this particular project. Thank you, Minister Meilleur, for your recognition of the Cornerstone project and your support for it.

All of these projects in my riding are bringing a whole new renaissance to the need for affordable housing and the importance of it. But that's not where it ends. We've got, on top of this, millions of dollars being invested to upgrade existing housing stock. Every single large apartment complex, mostly owned and operated by Ottawa Community Housing, has scaffolding on top of it right now. We are changing balconies. We are changing windows, putting in more energy-efficient windows. We are changing doors. We are changing carpeting in the hallways.

I have a habit of going door to door through all of the community housing buildings in my riding. I was doing this before I was elected, to meet members of the community, and have never stopped since I was elected. I see the difference. It's absolutely remarkable to see, not only in the physical health of the buildings as a result of the investment that is made in terms of rehabilitation and renovation of these particular buildings, but also in the attitude of people. These are people's homes. You can imagine the kind of positive difference it makes in their lives when they see their home being cleaned up, being spruced up, being renovated.

Just towards the end of the summer, I was in Gladstone Terrace, which is on the corner of Gladstone and Preston Street in my riding. It's seniors affordable housing by Ottawa Community Housing, and it's gone through all kinds of refurbishment in terms of change in quality of life. I remember knocking on doors through that particular building, and you heard issues and you heard complaints about the living conditions. This time, when I went knocking through those complexes, the biggest complaint I heard was that each floor has a garbage chute and the new lids for the garbage chutes were too stiff because they were brand new. They needed a little bit more WD-40 to make it easier to hold for senior citizens who live in the building.

I took a delight in finding out that that was the biggest concern the residents had, because they really appreciate the investments made. I got in touch with Ottawa Community Housing, and I want to give a big salute to Jo-Anne Poirier, who is the CEO of Ottawa Community Housing, a woman with a heart, a woman with incredible passion for affordable housing. She's great to work with, in helping the needs around affordable housing in our community. I called Jo-Anne and obviously she got her supervisor in to make it easier to open those chutes—an example of the kind of result of the investment.

We're talking, under the social housing repair and retrofit investment, about \$47 million being invested, as we speak, in upgrading affordable housing in Ottawa, and my riding of Ottawa Centre is a very significant recipient of that.

The new mayor, Jim Watson—who was the former Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in our gov-

ernment—has also made commitments towards investing in affordable housing. In his platform, he committed \$14 million in new funds for homelessness and poverty reduction, and in this budget which the city presented, those 14 million dollars are there and allocated. I want to thank Mayor Watson for making that commitment and following through with the commitment, because there is a lot of excitement in the community, and that's going to make a difference.

One of the big reasons that commitment was able to be made is because of the uploading the provincial government has been continuously doing of the social services that were downloaded by the previous Harris-Hudak government—in terms of downloading ODSP, the Ontario disability support program; downloading the ODB, the Ontario drug benefit; Ontario Works, OW; and other social services that were downloaded on the municipalities, draining their resources from doing anything else. The McGuinty government has steadfastly been uploading those services. ODB has been fully uploaded, ODSP uploading will be complete by the end of 2011, and we are now on the way to uploading Ontario Works.

As a result of these uploads—not to mention uploading around transportation, land ambulances, public health—the city of Ottawa has \$140 million more this year. As a result of uploading just around ODSP and ODB, they have about \$25 million more, and I was happy to see that Mayor Watson was able to take a big chunk of that \$25 million and reinvest it in affordable housing. I look forward to continuing to work with him and his council to find more money in the future. That pool of money available to the city of Ottawa because of uploading that is being done by the McGuinty government, which in this budget we have recommitted to—we will continue to invest in affordable housing.

This long-term affordable housing strategy is important because it sets out the framework to continue moving, to keep building on the successes that we have accomplished in the last eight years.

We need to make sure that the federal government also speaks of having a national housing strategy. We need to make sure that we ask those running for office this time around, in this election, to make a commitment to have a national housing strategy, as well.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I think the member from Ottawa Centre, for the most part, was very genuine in his comments. But when he started to stray off to the uploading/downloading discussion, this is a clear example of the McGuinty government's approach: It's sort of a stealthy way of shifting responsibility and any concern.

They started off, as the people of Ontario might recall, by having what they call a poverty reduction task force. We've said, on this side—our leader, Tim Hudak, says it frequently—that shelter is the single most important element of building the infrastructure for those persons. But what they've done here is they've downloaded housing to the municipal level.

I'm going to say right here on the record, with your indulgence, Madam Speaker—and this is actually from a report that's quite important. It's called *Where's Home?* It's a significant report by the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association. So this isn't some document that I have conjured up here. Here's one of the comments: "It proposes greater flexibility for service managers to make decisions about housing. It does not give us more money...." That's from Malcolm Hunt, the Peterborough city planning director.

So we know clearly that it's downloading by stealth, when you have a clear and overt way of avoiding the single most important thing. The member from Ottawa Centre was taking credit, but in fact they didn't upload—hardly. They've downloaded more than they've uploaded. Health care is a good example. Optometry, audiology, ophthalmology, chiropractic—all of it downloaded. So don't get into that discussion. The only way you've increased—you've reduced funding to health care by downloading a lot of costs to the consumer, including the health tax. This is another example of the stealthful way of shifting their responsibilities down to the taxpayer. It's just unacceptable.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: The member from Ottawa Centre is oh, so faithful to his party. He is such a true believer in what they are doing, even when all of the facts show that it's not correct. The UN rapporteur named Ontario for its lousy housing policy—not because they were doing a good job, but because they were doing a bad job.

When the member speaks, he talks about the money that Ontario is spending—the most in Confederation. But what he doesn't say is that we have by far and away the largest population of any province in the country. When New Brunswick spends \$200 million, they are, in fact, spending much more per capita than we are spending in Ontario. When Alberta spends the \$1.8 billion that he quoted, it's because they're spending three times as much per capita as we're spending in Ontario. When BC spends \$2 billion, they're spending twice as much as we're spending in Ontario. And the case goes on and on. We're not spending the most; we're spending the least. Don't ever think that because we're the largest and because we have the largest budget means that we're doing a good job, because we're not.

He talked about rent increases and all of what has happened. The inflation rates in the 1990s and early 2000s were many times higher than they are today. We are almost in a deflationary period. When you factor in the inflation versus the rent increase, will you find that they are virtually no different at all and that his party, which he is a true believer in, has not done anything that is unique and outside of what he says.

He talks about the 250 units in eight years. That's 30 units a year in his own riding. That is welcome, but disgraceful.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: The member from Ottawa Centre, I think, did a very good job of articulating the kind of investments that we've made: 270,000 new or refurbished units over the last number of years.

It's interesting: My friend from Durham quotes my good friend Malcolm Hunt, who I worked with for 18 years. But he should have also said that Malcolm Hunt reviewed the Tory years from 1995 to 2003, when the only provision they provided for affordable housing in Ontario was that they waived the provincial sales tax. He used to go to great lengths when we set up our local affordable housing committee. That was a shameful participation of the provincial government. So I always like to give Malcolm Hunt his due, and we should quote what he has had to say over the last 20 years about provincial support when it comes to affordable housing.

It's interesting, when you dig into the *Hamilton Spectator*, what you might find. I'd like to give a little quote here from Joyce Savoline when she was the regional chair, back in 1997, with regard to the who-got-done-in committee of Al Leach. She said, "When the province began this process, it said it would result in 'simpler, smaller, more accountable and less costly government ... and savings for taxpayers.' What they are doing does not achieve any of those goals. This is not what Premier Harris promised; it is not simpler, smaller, more accountable or less costly for government. And it certainly doesn't result in savings for Halton property taxpayers"—interesting quote.

And Chairman Savoline had this to say later that month in September 1997: "The province ought to be able to back up its stated belief that this swap of services will not increase property taxes for our residents.... Without this confirmation, it is questionable whether the province's promise has any more value than the phrase 'the Titanic is unsinkable'"—very interesting.

I could go on and on and on with more quotes from then-chair Joyce Savoline.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm pleased to join the debate with my colleague from Ottawa Centre, my colleague from Durham and, of course, my colleague from Peterborough.

Having said that, the member from Peterborough, if he wants to start going back and talking about quotes and trying to attack my colleague from Burlington, may also benefit from a history lesson. Of course, it was his previous leader—or his current leader, who will soon be previous leader—who once said he wouldn't raise taxes in 2003. Then presto, whammo, boom—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Whoa. What happened to that promise?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Well, he broke that, because he brought in the health tax.

Then he also said in 2007 that he wasn't going to raise taxes, and you know what he did? He took out his magic wand and there it was: another tax increase.

This government wants to play the blame game and the game where we can actually go back and review people's quotes. I'll just refer them to those two quotes—and we can go on about the HST, too, but we're not here for that; we're here for Bill 140.

The member from Peterborough rightly pointed out that our critic, Ms. Savoline, is the former regional chair of Halton. She decided she would run for the Ontario Progressive Conservatives, and has for two terms now, because she believes that this other group of people is on the wrong track. She has been very firm about this piece of legislation. She says that this government has stonewalled even important industry stakeholders from seeing what is really in this bill. However, and we'll see this today because this will likely collapse, they are trying to ram it through for debate after it's released. So this is a serious concern we have on this side of the House, but we expect nothing better from our colleagues opposite.

Although this was disappointing, it's obviously a clear indication from this government that they have no confidence in their affordable housing strategy. In fact, it was interesting that the former Minister of Municipal Affairs was disappointed and said so in the Ottawa Citizen.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Ottawa Centre has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thanks to all the members who spoke after my comments.

I'm only faithful to my constituents in Ottawa Centre. During the whole 20 minutes that I spoke, all the investments I was talking about and every single dollar I was outlining, I was talking about the investments in only the last four years since I was elected in 2007. I ask other members to reconsider their math accordingly.

I just want to highlight very quickly a report that came from the Alliance to End Homelessness, an organization in Ottawa which looked at homelessness in Ottawa from January to December 2010. The report is good to read. It calls for action; it asks that we do more. It also says, "At last—a solid increase in new affordable housing!" and it tracks affordable housing for the last several years. It asks all governments to invest more in terms of "appropriate investment in affordable housing, like the federal/provincial stimulus dollars," which "helps our community reach annual targets"—the kind of invest-

ment I was speaking of in my earlier comments. It also states that "The 2010 numbers are daunting, but hope is in the air. Our community can become inclusive and ensure everyone has an appropriate home by 2020." It goes through various statistics that they highlight as positive in 2010: 302 new units created in 2010 in Ottawa; 2,136 households moved from emergency shelter to permanent housing; 21,557 helped with housing services; 179 additional people who have received supports to be successfully housed; \$47 million in social housing repair and retrofit.

Nobody's arguing that this is it. We need to do more but we are on the right track and this long-term affordable housing strategy, which I will be wholeheartedly voting for, is going to ensure that we have a solid map, a blueprint for the future, so that we don't get into the kind of lapses we felt under the previous two governments.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Seeing none, on April 13, Mr. Bartolucci moved third reading of Bill 140. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

From the chief government whip: "Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on Bill 140, An Act to enact the Housing Services Act, 2010, repeal the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts, Minister Bartolucci, be deferred until Tuesday, April 19, 2011."

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further business?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): All those in favour, please say "aye."

I move that the House be adjourned.

Interjection: Until when?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1500.

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Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
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Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
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Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
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Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
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McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
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Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
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Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
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Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
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Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
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Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakubski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
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No. 111

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**Second Session, 39th Parliament**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**Deuxième session, 39^e législature**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)****Journal
des débats
(Hansard)****Tuesday 19 April 2011****Mardi 19 avril 2011**Speaker
Honourable Steve PetersClerk
Deborah DellerPrésident
L'honorable Steve PetersGreffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 19 April 2011

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 19 avril 2011

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Sikh prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CHRISTOPHER'S LAW (SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY) AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI CHRISTOPHER SUR LE REGISTRE DES DÉLINQUANTS SEXUELS

Mr. Bradley moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill 163, An Act to amend Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000 / Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi Christopher de 2000 sur le registre des délinquants sexuels.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the division of time for debate on government order G163.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed?

Mr. Peter Kormos: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I don't know whether the clock should be on the 20s or the way it is.

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Okay.

Bill 163, Christopher's Law, received first reading on March 10, 2011. I'm pleased to be able to speak to this important bill once again at third reading.

First, I would like to express thanks to my colleague David Zimmer for piloting this bill through the Legislature. He spent a good deal of time, effort and energy on the bill, and I want to commend him for the excellent work that he did.

I'd also like to thank the members on all sides of the House for their thoughtful and helpful contributions to the debate, in particular the critics for the Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party, who participated in a very positive manner on this debate.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the Stephenson family, and with us in the Legislature today is Jim Stephenson. Their courage and dedication in pre-

venting such heinous crimes as the one they experienced was the driving force behind the creation of the Ontario sex offender registry. On behalf of the people of Ontario, I want to thank Anna and Jim Stephenson for your support and for your tireless advocacy.

Finally, I would like to recognize the difficult work and dedication of the police officers across the province who investigate crimes of this nature and work to prevent the victimization of children. Particularly, I would like to thank Deputy Commissioner Scott Tod and the entire dedicated team at the OPP, including Chief Superintendent Ron Gentle and Staff Sergeant Adam Alderson.

Members of this House are aware that it was on April 4, 2000, that the Ontario Legislature passed Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000, to establish and maintain a registry of sex offenders that police can use proactively for investigative purposes and crime prevention. The protection of Ontarians from sex offenders is at the heart of Christopher's Law.

Christopher's Law requires sex offenders convicted of criteria sex offences to register with the police service in their area of residence. Persons who are found not criminally responsible on account of mental disorder in relation to a sex offence are also required to register. The OPP and police services across Ontario agree that Christopher's Law is a critical tool in fighting crime, protecting vulnerable children and adults and safeguarding our communities.

Ontario continues to be the only province to maintain its own sex offender registry. We believe that it provides us with direct control over the tools that our police services tell us they need to track and monitor convicted sex offenders quickly and effectively.

The federal government established a national sex offender registry in the year 2004. The national registry was similar to Ontario's, although different in some respects. On December 9, 2010, the federal government and the Parliament of Canada passed legislation, called Bill S-2, that brings the national registry more in line with Ontario's. That legislation came into force only last week. It addresses some of the concerns Ontario has expressed about the federal registry and, in doing so, creates differences between the national and provincial registries that must be resolved. The amendments we are proposing to Christopher's Law would help to align the legislation with the national sex offender registry legislation, as amended by Bill S-2.

I should add that even with federal enhancements to the national sex offender registry, Ontario's registry will maintain advantages, as an investigative tool, over the

national registry. For example, the Ontario registry can display offender residences within a specific proximity of a given location, such as a school. The Ontario registry also provides timely access for all police services in the province, which we all know is imperative in critical incidents where time is of essence.

Police across Ontario rely on the information in the Ontario sex offender registry to help them investigate and solve cases involving sexual offences. That is why they access the registry more than 745 times a day, on average. We need to continue to ensure that essential information that our police and communities rely on is as complete, as accurate and as up to date as possible. That is why, in 2008, this government amended Christopher's Law to enhance the effectiveness of Ontario's sex offender registry.

The logic behind a sex offender registry is quite simple: If police know the whereabouts of sex offenders in the community, they are better able to identify potential threats and can better focus their investigations. That is why Christopher's Law requires offenders convicted of a criteria offence and residing in Ontario to register with their local police service within 15 days after a triggering event such as their release from custody, a name change or an address change. Where there is no custodial sentence, they must register within 15 days after being convicted of a sex offence or within 15 days of receiving an absolute or conditional discharge for a sex offence when found not criminally responsible on account of a mental disorder.

Currently, police services in Ontario are responsible for Ontario and national sex offender registrations, but police services in Ontario only have direct access to the Ontario registry to input and search offender information.

0910

Because information captured by the Ontario and national registries is similar, police services in Ontario are only required to submit offender information into the Ontario registry. Information required by the national registry is automatically transmitted from the Ontario registry. However, the national registry now requires Ontario police services to collect additional information that cannot be entered into the Ontario registry because there's no legislative prerogative or authority to do so. As a result, information that is automatically submitted to the national registry could be incomplete.

Because of the adoption of Bill S-2, there are now differences between the Ontario national registries in the following areas. Bill S-2 requires offenders to register within seven days. The federal registry contains new mechanisms by which offenders convicted outside Canada could be required to register. The national registry will maintain the records of registered offenders who receive a pardon under the Criminal Records Act. The federal legislation also requires the reporting of certain volunteer and employment information.

The legislative amendments we are proposing would ensure consistency between the registries. Consistency is critical to the effectiveness of the registries both national

and provincial. It will help ensure more offenders of interest are identified by an Ontario registry search during time-sensitive investigations.

Having different Ontario and national registry reporting periods could increase the workload for Ontario police services. They would have to manually register offenders in Ontario for the national registry and confirm that offenders are fulfilling their national and Ontario reporting obligations if the registries were indeed inconsistent. The process of manually uploading information from local police to the OPP—and, by the way, the OPP is the only police service with direct access to the national registry—and from the OPP to the national registry could create delays—much too long for time-sensitive investigations. This bill will ensure Ontario continues to provide offender information to the national registry electronically and in real time.

Furthermore, where there are differences in the time allowed for offenders to report to the Ontario registry and the national registry, offenders may fail to differentiate the Ontario and national reporting requirements, resulting in potential criminal charges for offenders who mistakenly believe they have 15 days to report to the national registry.

Including sex offenders in the Ontario registry who have been convicted of a sex crime outside of Canada will help ensure that more offenders of interest are identified by an Ontario registry search.

The amendments we are proposing would address these issues in a number of specific ways. I would like to take this opportunity to remind members of the particular provisions of this bill that would, if passed, align Christopher's law with the amended national sex offender registry.

Section 1 of the bill would add two new clauses to the definition of "sex offence" in section 1 of the act. New clauses (b.2) and (b.3) would result in offences which were committed outside of Canada being included in the definition if the person who committed the offence is required to report to the federal sex offender registry pursuant to an obligation under either section 490.02901 of the Criminal Code or section 36.1 of the International Transfer of Offenders Act.

Section 2 of the bill would amend section 3 of the act to remove the 15-day reporting timelines and would provide for the timelines to be prescribed by regulation. The section would be further amended by adding two new clauses, (e.1) and (e.2), which would require offenders who are subject to a federal sex offender registry reporting obligation, pursuant to section 490.02901 of the Criminal Code or section 36.1 of the International Transfer of Offenders Act, to report to the Ontario registry within the time prescribed by the regulation.

Section 3 of the bill would amend section 7 of the act to remove the 15-day reporting timelines and to have the timelines prescribed by regulation. Section 3 of the bill also contains transition provisions which would stipulate that if the events that trigger a reporting obligation in subsection 7(2) of the act occur before the bill comes into

force, the old reporting obligation provisions would apply, and if such events occur on or after the bill comes into force, the new reporting obligation provisions would apply.

Section 4 of the bill would amend section 8 of the act to state that it applies to persons who become subject to an obligation to report to the national sex offender registry, pursuant to section 490.02901 of the Criminal Code, on or after the day this bill comes into force. It goes on to state that the duration of the reporting obligation under the act is for the duration of that federal reporting obligation.

Section 4 of the bill would further amend section 8 of the act to state that it applies to persons who become subject to an obligation to report to the national sex offender registry, pursuant to section 36.1 of the International Transfer of Offenders Act, on or after the day this bill comes into force. It goes on to state that the duration of the reporting obligation under the act is for the duration of that federal reporting obligation.

Section 5 of the bill would repeal subsection 9(3) of the act. Under that subsection, the ministry is required to remove all of an offender's information from the registry if the offender receives a pardon for all of the sex offences that triggered a reporting obligation.

Section 6 of the bill would add a new section to the act, section 9.1, which would require the ministry to remove all of an offender's information from the registry if the offender receives a free pardon for all of the sex offences that triggered a reporting obligation.

Section 7 of the bill would add a new regulation-making power to section 14 of the act, allowing for regulations to be made in relation to the various timelines of the reporting set out in obligations 3(1) and 7(2) of the act.

Even with the proclamation of federal Bill S-2, Ontario's registry will maintain the following advantages over the national registry: It is accessible to every police service in Ontario, whereas the national registry is only accessible by the OPP at their general headquarters in Orillia. As a result, the local police services have to contact the OPP to conduct national registry searches. It allows police to perform searches that display the offender residences within a specific proximity to a given location, such as a school. Not all offenders who report to the Ontario registry report to the national registry, and Ontario's registry is routinely checked by police services in the course of their investigations. Ontario's sex offender registry has a compliance rate of more than 97%, one of the highest compliance rates of all sex offender registries in operation, including registries in the United States.

Christopher's Law is an important piece of legislation. It is based on a simple proposition that if police know the whereabouts of all convicted sex offenders in the community, they are better able to identify potential threats and can better focus their investigation. The technical amendments proposed in this bill would, if adopted, maintain smooth and efficient sharing of information between local police services and both registries and more

closely align the Ontario's sex offender registry with the national registry.

In conclusion, the Ontario sex offender registry provides police with the information they need to help provide protection to our communities. A sex offender registry is also an effective tool in preventing such crimes. As Jim Stephenson, who is with us today, has said, "The sex offender registry reminds the sex offender that somebody is watching. If that isn't preventative enough, I don't know what else can be suggested."

I cannot think of a more opportune time to move forward these changes, especially given that this April 23 will mark the 10th anniversary of the proclamation of Christopher's Law.

The amendments proposed in Bill 163 will better align the sex offender registry with the national sex offender registry to maintain the prompt, effective sharing of information. It will also maintain the Ontario system's independence to be a more effective investigative tool and to provide greater protection for Ontario's communities.

I know I don't have to do this: My notes say, "I urge the members of the House to adopt these amendments," and I know that, in fact, the members have been kind enough to do so.

Again, as I conclude my remarks, there are certain pieces of legislation that cause great division within this House. There are philosophical differences between political parties and members who are here. This piece of legislation has the basic consent and agreement of all three parties, and it takes the co-operation of the opposition critics and the opposition House leaders to be able to process a bill of this kind in a timely fashion. I want to once again thank the critic for the Conservative Party, the critic for the New Democratic Party and all who are involved in this particular initiative.

0920

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions? Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise today and say a few words on Bill 163, An Act to amend Christopher's Law, in third reading. First of all, I want to say to all the members who sat on the committee and have spoken in this House: Thank you for the swift passage of this bill to align it with Bill S-2, the federal national sex offender registry. I particularly want to thank the member from Welland, who, last week during committee, brought forward a motion to actually go into clause-by-clause in the afternoon last Thursday. It allowed us to get clause-by-clause complete and allowed us to have third reading debate this morning.

We are concerned with how long the House will sit, and one thing we didn't want to have happen was to see this bill lost somehow. Now with the passage of this bill, we will be able to nationally align ourselves with Bill S-2. On top of that, we'll be prepared for the 10th anniversary of the Ontario sex offender registry which, as the minister has said, is next week. I do believe there are a couple of events scheduled at the OPP general headquarters celebrating that great day.

We're quite proud of this bill, and we will always support law and order, of course. Christopher's Law was originally enacted under the PC government in 2000, both with the hard work of now-Senator Runciman and Minister David Tsubouchi at the time.

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: It sounds really good, yeah.

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I bet he wishes he was here today to listen to the debate on this.

We are pleased that Christopher's Law is being strengthened by aligning it with the recent changes made by the federal government on the national registry. We have always felt, as Conservatives and, I think, as members of this House, and the folks up at the Ontario sex offender registry always felt, that we had the state-of-the-art registry to begin with. All these changes only strengthen it and make it not only one of the top registries in North America but throughout the world as well.

I really want to say something this morning about Mr. Stephenson. He's in the audience, and this bill came about as a result of the death of his son Christopher in 1988. You know, it takes somebody very, very special to have that kind of compassion and love for someone that they would move legislation through, talking to different governments at different stages, so that we can have something as good as this bill is today. Mr. Stephenson has been with us through all of the debate. He spoke on the bill at committee. I know he's here today as well. I'm sure he'll be up in Orillia next week at the 10th anniversary. I really just want to say how important it is that we have this true leadership coming from our families in cases like this where they have had the greatest loss.

However, on the other hand, you have to say that if you look at the impact this bill has had on all Canadians or on all Ontarians, I can't imagine how many lives this legislation has saved in the last decade. People who are under constant scrutiny, who might have reoffended, are simply under the kind scrutiny and watch such that they can't move forward with any other terrible crimes.

It brings me to think of a couple of things I watched just recently. I just wanted to talk about some of the fine work of our people in law enforcement. I saw the story the other night, the CBC story on the Fifth Estate on the terrible crimes of Russell Williams. That's a show I just couldn't quit watching. It was so unbelievable that somebody who was that brilliant and such a leader in the armed forces could have a second life and be leading these terrible, terrible tragedies of sex crimes throughout that area—again, the sad story of little Tori Stafford and other cases. I just want to say that because I think in each case it showed the fine police work that solved these crimes. I think it's important to put on record that these types of crimes continue to this day, but with the sex offender registry, we can point out that, in each and every case, these people will never reoffend again.

I'd also like to thank the staff of the Ontario sex offender registry. The minister mentioned Ron Gentle and

Adam Alderson. Jim Mascola is another one. Again, as I mentioned earlier, the anniversary is next week.

In summary, I really want to say that our caucus is very, very proud of this bill. We're happy that the minister has brought in these amendments that will align the bill with the federal legislation. We want to move forward in future years, and when other amendments are necessary, make it even stronger and even better for the people of our province and our country.

With that, I just want to bring it to a conclusion today. I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words on this. Our caucus will definitely be supporting this legislation, and we look forward to the passage of the bill, the proclamation of the bill and passing it on to the folks at the Ontario sex offender registry to implement in the best possible way.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I see that I'm joined here by the member from Niagara Falls, seated at my left. I suspect he's trying to get a view of the House from this side to prepare himself for after October 6. I'm not sure, but I have no qualms whatsoever with him joining me here. He can't leave now; he'll just draw more attention to himself.

Of course, New Democrats support this legislation. We made that clear from the get-go. These are important amendments, as we all know. We in the NDP have done our best—the others have too—to expedite the passage of this bill. I have no apologies for that. We understand the legislation; we understand its significance and its relevance.

There were very brief committee hearings, the only reason being that there weren't a whole lot of people eager to participate, for reasons that I don't understand. But one of the most important participants, in addition to Mr. Stephenson, was one Dr. Lisa Doupe, who appeared at the committee. She's a medical doctor here in the city of Toronto, a psychotherapist who works with sex offenders. She brought a dimension to this discussion or debate that's too often overlooked, because, of course, in this climate of competing to be more law-and-order than the other guy, it's somehow sacrilege from some quarters to talk about the need to treat offenders so that they don't reoffend.

We know that the sex offender registry contains 97%, give or take, of the names, identities, of people who have been convicted of sexual offences, those that require them to register, and we also know that that means that 2% or 3% aren't on the registry. We also know that those 2% or 3% are the ones most likely to reoffend. That's why they don't register. It's not rocket science. You don't have to be a genius to figure that out. Those people, of course, pose great danger to the community, and the sex offender registry does not protect us from those people. In fact, the sex offender registry, in our view, has a couple of functions: One, first and foremost, is the investigative tool, and police officers talked about that

when they attended the committee hearing last week here at Queen's Park. It's not a perfect investigative tool because, as I say, there's 3% of people who aren't registered, and those are the most dangerous persons most likely to reoffend.

I submit that there's also an element of scarlet-lettering here. This indicates that there's a stigma; yes, there's a stigma attached to being a sex offender—darned right there is. I, quite frankly, am torn about the sex offender registry being private or, as it is in some other jurisdictions—not in Canada, but the United States, most notably—public, because I believe that people have a right to protect their families and protect their children. Having said that, the observation was made at committee hearings that the privacy of the sex offender registry, accessible only by police officers, police forces, helps innocent people to register. If it were public, there would probably be an even higher rate than the 3% who don't register their names. But as I say, that's a debate that I'm sure will be ongoing and it's one that I have mixed feelings about.

0930

Dr. Lisa Doupe raised this whole spectre of treatment. She acknowledged that she deals with low-risk offenders, and the inference I drew from that is that high-risk offenders are all that much more difficult to treat, or are untreatable, perhaps. She was very, very fervent in her advocacy for treatment. She made reference to—she brought the book with her. She brandished it like a preacher brandishes the Bible. She made reference to the book, *The Brain That Changes Itself* by Norman Doidge, and urged all of us to read chapter 4, which I'm doing at her urging, and I find it a very valuable exercise. It's insightful for a whole pile of reasons, not just with respect to why this psychotherapeutic approach that she advocates can be helpful for treating sex offenders and making sure that they don't reoffend.

But she also made note—because I asked her about this. “Dr. Doupe, here you are in the city of Toronto, this large urban centre.” I said, “What about folks down where I come from in Niagara region? What about folks in northern Ontario and in remote communities? Where do they get this kind of treatment?” And she acknowledged that it's hard to access. There's not a whole lot of people doing it. There's not a whole lot of governmental support for this sort of stuff.

I'm a little familiar with what goes on inside our reformatories, our provincial correctional institutions. Many years ago I used to be a criminal lawyer—some folks know that—which is as good a career to lead up to politics as any, I suppose. It probably should have made me eligible for the Senate. But many years ago, I was a criminal lawyer and acted for a whole lot of people convicted of many of these types of offences—or charged with them; not all convicted. One of the things I asked Dr. Doupe about was treatments inside our institutions, because I know that they were hard to come by 30 years ago when I was practising law. Her response was that they're probably even harder to come by now. Isn't that a shame?

We had the cable TV scandal, if you will, last week, and the minister very effectively disarmed the opposition on it. I admired his political skill as he handled that. But the real story last week, during the cable TV scandal, wasn't that there was enhanced cable going into our institutions; the real story was that television has replaced programs in our institutions, that our correctional institutions are using TV to babysit inmates in the same way that very busy parents use TV to babysit their kids. Good grief.

We've got somebody in a provincial institution—maximum two years less a day, and most don't serve anywhere near that. Why aren't we doing something meaningful? A whole lot of sex offenders are getting sentences of less than two years less a day. The more serious ones, obviously, go into penitentiaries. The real story from the cable scandal last week wasn't the enhanced cable; it was the fact that television has replaced programs. I don't fault this minister; that was the hand that he was dealt when he became minister.

When we've got people living in institutions, surely there are better things for them to be doing than watching television, watching stupid American sitcoms. I've been in these places, and they're watching TV not just at night like you and your family might do from time to time, but they're watching it during the day too, because our provincial institutions have become warehouses.

We've got this hare-brained scheme—and I know it doesn't come from the minister; it comes from the Premier's office—to shut down local, regional detention centres, the ones in Owen Sound and Sarnia and yet another one in that same part of the woods, and the government is building these huge American-style mega-prisons, which are understaffed, overpopulated, dangerous for the correctional staff, dangerous for the inmates, and they're centralized. Inmates will be shipped from Owen Sound over two and half—what is it, Mr. Craitor?—two and a half or three hours to Penetanguishene, to that mega-jail that the Tories built in Penetanguishene, or two to two and a half hours down to the Windsor mega-jail, to be warehoused. They won't have access to community supports. They won't have access to the Salvation Army people in their community. They won't have access even to the lawyers in their own community. That's not corrections.

I know I'm digressing just a little bit, but it's still quite relevant because if we're going to put people in jail for these offences—and we should. Again, you put dangerous offenders in jail for a long, long time because they pose a risk to the community and to potential victims whether they're in jail for two years, five years or 10 years. But if others are going to be released, you had better be doing something with them while they're in jail. Dr. Doupe says we should be working harder in treatment. I agree. I suspect most members of this Legislature would as well. That means we have got to make those kinds of investments.

I want to thank and commend Jim Stephenson for his tenacity, for his courage. I suspect he'll be on this file for

a good chunk of time yet to come, trying to make the process better and better and safer and safer.

I don't share the enthusiasm of my colleague for the 10th anniversary of the registry. I'm not big on anniversaries, but it's also not something that I think we should necessarily be celebrating. We should be trying to build a society, a community, a country, a group of people where people can be safe in their community and, quite frankly, be safe in their own homes. We know that a whole lot of kids who are victims of sexual offenders are victimized in their own homes. There's perhaps nothing more despicable than that. But to those who attend the 10th anniversary, I say good luck to you.

We've worked very hard in the NDP to avoid politicizing this particular issue. As I say, it has moved along at an appropriate pace. It doesn't require more debate.

I want to remind members that there used to be a time here—the minister knows it because he was already a seasoned veteran when I came here 23 years ago—when governments didn't play politics with time allocation motions, closure motions. There was a time here when there wasn't a one-hour limit on lead speeches, when sometimes a lead speech would be two hours or three hours. It was also a time, I tell you, when more legislation got passed than does now. Bills that could be dealt with in a reasonably efficient way, like this one, proceeded reasonably promptly—not without appropriate oversight, not without second and third reading. This bill is getting second and third reading, but this bill is moving along as it should. As I say, there was a time when that happened a heck of a lot more than it does now.

I blame the first Liberal Premier that I served with, Bob Rae, for making some of the most dramatic rule changes in terms of controlling the participation by members in process. Of course, the subsequent Tory regime and now the Liberals again have compressed the role of this chamber and its members. I don't find that particularly attractive or helpful. We as an institution have done ourselves a disservice in that regard.

I'm close to closing. We've worked very hard to avoid politicizing this, but for the life of me, I'm betting dollars to doughnuts that the Liberals won't be able to help themselves. Just watch: This is going to go to a vote in a few minutes. There will be Liberals here who will vote against this bill, who will say no when the question is put, "Shall this bill carry?" Their purpose in doing that will be then to force a recorded vote when it has been made clear by every member of this chamber, by every caucus, by every party in this assembly, that we support the legislation. I find it particularly distasteful that, when so much goodwill has been demonstrated over the course of the passage of this bill, at the end of the day, when it comes down to third reading, the Liberals may well force a recorded vote.

That has become their habit. I don't know who took the stupid pills and decided that this was some kind of clever trick or tactic, but they're clearly overdosing. Somehow, the impression is that if you're not recorded in the recorded vote, if for whatever reason you're not here, somehow you don't support the legislation. I don't know

what the method is to, truly, their madness, but they should be embarrassed if they do that on this one. They should be embarrassed by trivializing what is important legislation that has received the enthusiastic support of the whole assembly, of all three caucuses. They should be embarrassed by playing that cheap stunt here this morning.

Let's see whether or not they serve the memory of Christopher Stephenson well.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions? Further debate?

Seeing no further debate, Mr. Bradley has moved third reading of Bill 163. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

I declare that the ayes have it. This will be a deferred vote, until after question period.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Orders of the day?

Hon. Gerry Phillips: No further business.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): We're recessed until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 0941 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I am pleased today to introduce to members of this chamber two people with the Ontario Real Estate Association. I'd like colleagues to welcome Barb Sukkau, who is here in the gallery, as well as Matthew Thornton. Barb is the president of the Ontario Real Estate Association and Matthew is the manager of government relations.

I urge all members today to celebrate with OREA and with the three parties. I believe they're either in the legislative dining room or another one of the committee rooms today to host a reception.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm delighted that we have staff from the early learning policy and programs branch at the Ministry of Education here today. The senior managers are Jim Grieve, Jill Vienneau, Rupert Gordon and Michelle Braakman. We're delighted that they've been able to join us today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Seated in the Speaker's gallery today are a number of guests of mine that I'd like to welcome. First, I'd like to welcome Kyle Waters and Barrett Nicpon. Welcome to Queen's Park today. I'd also like to welcome two good friends of mine from Winnipeg who are visiting: Steve Moran, and a long-time friend and good travelling buddy over the years, Phil Mandzuk. Welcome to Ontario.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would like to introduce the parents of page Daniel Mateus: his mother, Liliana Jimenez; sister, Sarah Mateus; friend, Nhora Medina; and friend, Gonzalo Diaz, in the gallery.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I invited everyone to a reception in the dining room when in fact the reception for OREA today is in room 228 and 230. It is co-sponsored by all three political parties. I know that Mr. Caplan as well as Mr. Prue will join me in welcoming them, as well as all members of this House.

Hon. Aileen Carroll, P.C.: I'm not sure if they've yet assembled in the Legislature with us, but we have a civics class visiting today from Central Collegiate in Barrie who have come to watch the practice of democracy in their province. Their teacher, Doug Young, is here with them, and I'm hoping they'll soon file in.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I trust all members will set a good example for the civics class that will be joining us.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Yesterday, the member from Sarnia-Lambton asked you to apologize to the members of a delegation from Sarnia who were given a veiled threat when they met with you. They were told to go away quietly or their courthouse would be on the chopping block next.

You passed on the opportunity to apologize, saying that you didn't really know where it came from. Let me quote Mayor Mike Bradley, who said in a radio interview that "the most shocking thing was, there was a hint that at some point the courthouse could be gone too."

Minister, you used to believe that local leaders and families should be shown respect. When did you start thinking that they deserved bully tactics and veiled threats like the one Mayor Bradley said you made?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I am the last person in the world who would use bullying tactics, as you have described them. I can say to the member that at no time was there ever such a suggestion that the courthouse would be closed or any threat of that nature. Your member for Sarnia was there at the time. I've always known him to be a person of integrity and truth. I think that he was there, and in his heart of hearts, if he were telling us what really happened at the meeting—I can tell the member that there was absolutely no suggestion at any time that any action would be taken against the courthouse in Sarnia—absolutely none. I don't know why—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Premier McGuinty and his Liberals have changed. The minister has said that in no way, shape or form was any threat ever made at that meeting, but Mayor Bradley isn't the only one who left with the impression that the future of the courthouse is now in question. There were 13 other members of the community there as well.

One of them was Helen Turner, president of the Lambton Law Association. She was also left with the impression that the future of the courthouse was in question. Minister, how out of touch are you that you believe everyone else at the meeting got it wrong and you got it right?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I actually thought that it was—

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member for Oxford is intervening. He should be worrying about the days of day-trading at Agricorp. That's one thing we have to worry about, when to intervene.

I've got to say to the member that I don't know how that impression could ever be created. I don't want to put your fellow member, Bob Bailey—sorry, the member from Sarnia-Lambton—on the spot, but he was at that meeting, and I can tell you that at no time was there any suggestion at all that the courthouse was in jeopardy. I just don't know how that impression was gained. The only reference I can remember—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It's pretty clear that after eight years in office the McGuinty Liberals have completely lost touch. This isn't a tough one. The right thing to do is to say "sorry" and to assure all Sarnia families that the courthouse is not on the chopping block next. But you've had every chance to do so, and you keep passing it up. When you said you didn't know who heard the threat, we told you. When you said that the threat was never made, we proved it was.

You've run out of excuses, just like you've run out of gas. Why won't you accept responsibility and apologize for the threats made to Mayor Bradley and to the people of Sarnia?

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member obviously did not listen to the answer, because she got up and read her next question, which said what I had said. Clearly, at no time was there ever a suggestion that the courthouse is closing. The courthouse is not closing. The only reference I can recall being made to it in the meeting was that there's some work being done to the courthouse at the present time. That's the only reference I can remember being made to the courthouse itself.

I say for the third time to the member that there was never any threat in that regard. The courthouse is not closing in the city of Sarnia, and I honestly don't know how people would gain that particular impression from the conversation of a very good meeting between those from Sarnia and representatives—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr. Robert Bailey: Back to the Minister of Correctional Services: You say that the reason for closing the Sarnia jail is to save money. I say that the decision to

close the Sarnia jail and move those operations to Windsor is another step in the McGuinty Liberal seat-saver program.

Let's look at your side of the argument. According to documents obtained by the Ontario PC caucus, the Sarnia jail is in fact one of the most efficient and well-run jails in Ontario. On my side of the argument, the super-jail that will swallow up the Sarnia jail and take all those jobs from Sarnia is in the finance minister's riding.

Why should Sarnia families have to pay the price for the McGuinty Liberals' seat-saver plan once again stealing jobs?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Perhaps in one of the supplementary questions the member would reveal to the House the fact that there was never any threat to the closing of the courthouse in his riding. I know he was at that meeting.

1040

To get back to the issue at hand, if you think this is the case, two of the decommissionings that took place in the province of Ontario are in ridings held by government members, and two in ridings held by opposition members. So there's no political consideration in this at all.

I get the information made available to me by the officials of the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services. They provide all of the information to me in terms of the fact that they believe they will save about \$2 million in decommissioning that particular jail—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Back to the minister: The Sarnia jail employs 76 hard-working, dedicated staff. The jail in the finance minister's riding is over two and a half hours away. So when the Sarnia jail closes its doors, that's 76 jobs lost to the Sarnia-Lambton community. That's 76 Sarnia families who will be out of work or have to move away from home and live their lives again so that the finance minister can once again feather his nest.

Why should Sarnia-Lambton families have to pay such a high price just so the finance minister can do another feel-good, seat-saver announcement in his riding?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I suspect that the member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills would understand exactly what we're talking about, being a member who's been here for a period of time, and recognizing that some of these same arguments were put forward—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Simcoe-Grey, you're sitting directly to my left; the minister is sitting directly to my right and I can't hear him, courtesy of you.

Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I am certain that the same challenges were faced when your government closed the jails in the following places: Cobourg, Ontario; Haileybury; L'Orignal; Waterloo-Wellington; Parry Sound; Barrie; Peterborough; Guelph; Cornwall; Burtch; Lindsay; Whitby; Brampton; Millbrook; and Sault Ste. Marie. I'm sure the minister of the day, Mr. Runciman,

got all the information available to him from the ministry and made the decisions based on the information provided by ministry officials.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Back to the minister: Taking the jobs of 76 Sarnia families is a high price to pay just so the finance minister can once again feather his nest. It's particularly hard to swallow when you think of all the times he has taken advantage of this seat-saver program across this whole province. Who can forget the Windsor Energy Centre, which cost Ontario families \$100 million—even though it has yet to produce a single watt of power? Or the casino, which has become known as the Dwight elephant?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Speaker likes elephants, particularly one named Jumbo, but I would ask the member to withdraw that comment.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I withdraw.

Now, it's a job-stealing super-jail. What's next—turning the casino hotel rooms into the headquarters for your online gaming experiment?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I want to say to the member, there's a member whom I have a good deal of respect for on the Conservative caucus over there. When you were going through the exercise, previously, of closing several jails—you heard me list all the jails that the Conservative Party, when in power, had closed—first of all, a very good friend of mine, Senator Bob Runciman, said that we have some of the oldest infrastructure in Canada. He said that closing the older jails was simply common sense. My friend from Wellington-Halton Hills, whom I respect greatly, said the following: "I think the people of Ontario would expect us to look at how we're operating the system of provincial jails and find ways to do it better and cheaper." I happen to agree with my very good friend—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

NORTHERN ONTARIO ECONOMY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Northern Ontario has abundant natural wealth, yet the region has suffered economically under this government's watch. More than 30 mills have closed and 40,000 forestry jobs have been lost over the past eight years.

What will it take for the McGuinty Liberals to stop paying lip service to northern Ontario and instead properly consult and implement policies that actually grow northern Ontario's economy?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Northern Development.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: As the leader of the third party knows well, on March 4, 2011, we released the northern Ontario growth plan, a plan that's an economic vision for northern Ontario for the next 25 years. Part of that, as well, were a number of marquee initiatives, including putting together a northern policy institute and

looking at our multi-modal transportation strategy, which is so important. And that does not even speak to the measures that we've put in place to assist the forestry sector through these very, very challenging times, let alone the other aspects of northern Ontario economic development opportunity, such as the Ring of Fire, which is part of our Open Ontario plan.

There are many measures we've put in place, recognizing the challenges that have been faced by northern Ontario. In particular, that's why we were so pleased that the northern Ontario growth plan, the second one in the province, was given to northern Ontario so we could develop our own economic vision.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This government won't admit it but, routinely, northerners haven't been properly consulted on issues that affect their daily lives: not when the Far North Act was adopted, not when the northern growth plan was drafted, not when the process of timber reallocation was changed. More recently, the McGuinty Liberals refused to travel across northern Ontario for Bill 151 hearings, despite that bill's consequences for forestry-dependent towns.

Why does this government continue to show such contempt for northern Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: That is truly an absurd thing to say related to the consultation efforts of our government. May I say, to reference the northern Ontario growth plan, we went through a period of two and a half years of extensive consultations. In fact, to some degree, people said, "Why don't you bring it out more quickly?" Because we wanted to be sure that we consulted thoroughly.

In terms of Bill 151, modernizing the forest tenure legislation, we had extensive consultations for over two years. Indeed, we had extensive presentations by northerners at our public hearings last week. We take second place to no one in terms of consultation with northerners because we recognize, myself as a member and all my northern caucus members, how important it is for us to consult. That's why we have a vision for northern Ontario through the northern Ontario growth plan. That's why we're planning a regional economic summit to follow up on the implementation of that plan in June, and we are very excited about the opportunities that are there.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Northerners are sick and tired of the empty promises. Forest-dependent communities like Wawa, Dubreuilville and Sioux Lookout are losing their wood allocation without being given a reason. The livelihood of entire communities is at risk, yet this government seems oblivious to it all. Enough is enough.

When will this government stop thumbing its nose at northern Ontario and start giving a damn about the good people, the proud people who live there?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Speaking specifically related to the wood supply competition, we have made about 20 announcements, which are helping many communities, creating or retaining over 1,000 jobs. We recognize that

not everybody has been successful, but we're working with those communities to try and find solutions to some of their challenges.

In terms of the forest tenure legislation, we are acting to make sure that the forestry sector is revitalized as a result of us making sure that our crown forest is no longer hoarded, that our Ontario wood is put back to work. There is example upon example of the support that we've shown for the forestry sector by offering up to a billion dollars in incentives, including uploading road maintenance that that previous government downloaded to the forestry sector back in the early 1990s.

There are examples of consultation, examples of assistance, and nobody is more strongly supporting northern Ontario than our northern Ontario Liberal caucus members.

GASOLINE PRICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Acting Premier. Rural and northern Ontario drivers are especially angry about gas price gouging. In Timmins this morning, frustrated motorists were filling up at \$1.37 a litre. In Sudbury, it's \$1.34 a litre. In Kapuskasing, it's \$1.40.

In every eastern province but Ontario, governments have moved to stop these kinds of rip-offs by regulating the price of gasoline. Why does this government continue to take the side of big oil companies and refuse to protect the interests of Ontario drivers?

1050

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The situation in world energy markets and oil markets is affecting the price of gasoline right across the world. In fact, in a number of major Canadian centres outside of Ontario, prices are actually higher than they are here in some Ontario centres, and it does vary. It's interesting: I paid \$1.24 in Windsor on Sunday; on the same day in Toronto, it was \$1.35. The member opposite knows that in those jurisdictions that have chosen what are really not regulatory regimes, the prices are higher.

This kind of mindless grandstanding on the price of gasoline is designed not to solve a problem but to get cheap votes. Do you know what? We have a lot going for us in this province. The price of oil and gas—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: A CIBC study says that the increase in gas prices could cost the average Ontario household as much as \$950 more this year alone. That's causing real pain to Ontario families already struggling with sky-high hydro bills and punishing home heating costs.

New Democrats know that Ontario can't insulate itself from increases in world oil prices, but we also know that there is much that the government can do to ease the pain, particularly in rural and northern communities. Why does this government continue to be the only eastern Canadian province that sides with oil companies over its motorists?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Because their regulatory regimes don't work. They in fact hold the prices up. You're talking about jurisdictions with a fraction of the population of Ontario and markets that are much more solid.

Hon. James J. Bradley: This is a federal issue.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: My colleague reminds me that in fact it is a federal issue.

Regulatory regimes in the provinces don't work. They keep the price of gasoline up. So I reject her suggestion. Liberals reject that suggestion. What we're going to continue to do is make investments in our economy that create jobs, improve wealth and build a better future for our children.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Here's a possible reason: Maybe it's because the finance minister himself has a real soft spot for the oil companies.

On April 12, he responded to my question by saying, "The leader of the third party earlier this morning tweeted that we're giving oil companies tax cuts. What she doesn't realize is, they don't headquarter here or pay their corporate taxes here."

Here's a memo to the minister: "All oil companies operating in Ontario pay Ontario corporate tax on their refineries, storage tanks and gas stations located in Ontario."

When is the minister going to quit spinning and admit that Ontarians are getting fleeced and that his government is only more than willing to help the oil companies in getting away with it?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Imperial Oil, for instance, moved its headquarters to Alberta several years ago. The leader of the third party knows about that.

What is important to Ontarians is the fact that our economy has turned the corner. Here's what the Financial Times FDI Intelligence unit today named "the top two destination states for foreign direct investment ... in North America.... California saw new projects rise 7% to 172, while Ontario" had "a 21% jump in new projects, for a total of 127." We also ranked second behind California in new capital investment, but we led in resulting job creation. They further describe Toronto as one of the "most attractive business cities in North America."

That's what our plan is about; not about mind-numbing—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CHILD CARE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Education. After four years of letting families believe that daycare inspection and serious-incident reports would be posted online, Ontario families were very shocked and troubled to learn that their government had taken no action. Even more troubling was the minister's reaction when she was confronted by her government's failure to keep this promise. It was as though she was

commenting on someone else's poor conduct. She said she found it "unacceptable."

Were you referring to your colleagues the Minister of Children and Youth Services and her predecessors, who failed to keep this promise to families, or were you meaning to say it was unacceptable for the Premier to make the promise he never intended to keep?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Yesterday, I was very clear that this ministry will be posting online the results of inspection reports within a month. That was the commitment that was made to families.

I think that it's also important for the honourable member to remember that parents have access to this information in every child care facility in the province of Ontario. I would say to the honourable member: That was not the case when you were in government. Parents do have access to this information. We want to make it available for everyone on the Web; that will happen within the month.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: There were 5,500 incidents reported at child care centres last year. This government promised four years ago to post these findings. You can imagine how troubled and shocked Ontario families were yesterday to hear that the minister who has been part of the government looked to blame—as today—others. Just as troubling is the excuse that was given that the promise which was made will not be kept because of privacy concerns with posting reports online, since we know the city of Toronto has been posting its findings from incident reports.

This government made the promise four years ago. I ask you: Why did your government not keep its promise to families and children?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I would say to the honourable member she would do well to actually go to the city of Toronto website, and she will find that, in fact, incident reports are not there. Rather than just read the paper, you might want to actually go to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew will please come to order. You're constantly interjecting to the minister, and your colleague wants to hear the answer.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I do.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I think it's very important that we clarify what is available to families. We do want to be sure that when we make information available in a public way, we are sensitive to all of the laws that we have, including the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

We continue to work on ways that information can be made available around incidences, around convictions, if you will, in facilities. We have not been able to land on that yet, but—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: A question for the Minister of Energy: Under the long-term energy plan, how much new renewable energy will the government bring online in Ontario between 2020 and 2030?

Hon. Brad Duguid: In the long-term energy plan, we're looking at 10,700 megawatts of new, clean renewable power coming online, we expect, by 2018 indeed.

It would be nice, though, to have the NDP supporting the important investments that we're making to be able to accomplish this as we move off of dirty coal. Just last week, my colleague joined me at the Lung Association, where we announced that we're making great progress. We've reduced coal in the first quarter of this year compared to the first quarter of 2003 by a full 90%—tremendous progress—but we won't be satisfied until coal is gone 100%.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Either the minister doesn't know the facts, or he didn't want to answer the question; I don't know. But luckily, a new Ministry of Energy document quietly submitted last week to the Darlington nuclear joint review panel does answer that question. The document shows that only one kind of power will be brought online in Ontario between 2020 and 2030: nuclear power, which will almost double in output. There will be no new renewable energy and barely any energy conservation.

Why is this government abandoning clean renewable energy in 2020 and focusing only on expensive and risky nuclear power?

1100

Hon. Brad Duguid: I suggest the member take a look at our long-term energy plan which we released last November, turn to pages 28 and 29, and he'll find that the answers are there and that, indeed, we'll be creating 10,700 megawatts of renewable energy by 2018.

But I ask the member, for my personal reference, and maybe Ontario families would like to know, on what page the NDP energy plan talks about renewable energy. Wait a minute; that's going to be a little hard to find because they haven't brought forward any plan on energy. In fact, they've opposed every effort that we've made to conserve power. They've opposed every effort we've made to move off the dirty coal, to build cleaner sources of power in this province. They talk a good game, but when it comes to making the investments, they run and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, the Canada health transfer agreement expires in 2014. This agreement between the federal government and the provinces provides funding towards our publicly funded health care system. I know that to maintain our health care system,

we will need a renewed agreement after 2014. This federal election is a great opportunity to remind the parties in Ottawa about the need for this agreement to be negotiated. Minister, what is this government doing to ensure that a renewed Canada health transfer agreement in 2014 will protect the interests of Ontarians?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Mississauga–Brampton South for the question. This government knows that it is vitally important in this federal election for all of the parties to support an extension of the Canada health transfer to ensure a strong future for our cherished public health care system. That's why just last week the Premier called on all federal parties to commit to a 10-year agreement by 2012 so we can continue with a long-term plan for health care.

I know our government's commitment to health care does not end in 2014, and I think that Ontarians want to know that the federal government's commitment doesn't end there either. It's very important that we have the co-operation on the other side of the negotiating table to ensure the future of Ontario's precious health care system.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: We all know that there is more to dealing with this agreement than simply getting it signed. We need to ensure that the federal government lives up to their end to ensure a fair agreement that provides the needed funding that Ontarians deserve. We also know that the federal government's contribution to health care is much lower than it historically has been. Minister, what is this government doing to ensure that the federal government pays Ontario's fair share of health care funding?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I agree with the member: We need to ensure in these negotiations that Ontario receives its fair share of funding from the federal government.

Make no mistake about it: Provinces need sustained federal funding to ensure a strong future for our health care system. Specifically, we have asked that the federal government maintain the 6% increase in spending on health care. Currently the federal government contributes about 23% of every dollar spent on health care in Ontario. It is very important that that funding continue.

We're calling on the federal government to call together the provincial governments to negotiate by the end of 2012 so we can continue to plan for health care so it's there for Ontario families.

COURT DOCUMENTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Acting Premier. Today, as we speak, there is a court hearing downtown. At that hearing, your lawyers are fighting to stop a judge from reviewing thousands of documents when deciding whether your party broke election laws or not. We would like to know what is in those documents that has caused you to dispatch a battery of lawyers to block a judge from seeing this evidence.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite knows this is a matter before the courts. It would be completely

inappropriate for me to comment on it. I'm certainly not familiar with what's in those documents, in any event, but what I can say is this: People do want to know about health care and the future of health care in this province. They want to know why that member and her party want to cut \$3 billion from health—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Another outburst from the member from Renfrew and I will have to warn him.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That member and her party have fully disclosed that they'll have to close hospitals; they'll have to let nurses go. They've fully disclosed that they'll shut down full-day learning. That's what's important to Ontarians: to stop that kind of mentality and build better public services for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Not one iota of his rhetoric is true. He knows it. In fact, that party has become—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment she just made.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn.

Publicly, you and your officials have kept insisting that there are no formal connections between you and the Working Families Coalition and that you have nothing to hide. Judging by the answer I just heard, there clearly is something to hide, because if you truly had nothing to hide, then why are you trying to stop a judge from looking at all the evidence when he rules on whether or not you broke election laws?

What is in those documents that you don't want the public to see?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I will remind the member opposite of what Elections Ontario said in response to their complaint on this issue. They said, "In our view, the evidence does not support the allegations that the WFC was the agent of or was acting on behalf of the Ontario Liberal Party."

The member had to withdraw a comment, Mr. Speaker; you made her withdraw it, quite appropriately, because it was inappropriate. She's asking, in my view, a question that was responded to by Elections Ontario in an appropriate fashion. The only thing being kept hidden from Ontarians is how many hospitals you will close, how many nurses you will lay off, how many kids will lose their teacher and how you are going to pay for your \$3-billion-to-\$6-billion tax cuts.

We're going to stand up for strong, better public services, and we welcome the support of all Ontarians—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CANCER SCREENING

M^{me} France G  linas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Sant   et des Soins de longue dur  e. In the last provincial election campaign, this party made a promise. It promised to fund prostate-specific antigen tests, better known as PSA tests, for Ontario men. I quote

a Toronto Star article from 2007: "Most people would not have the resource of an OHIP-funded PSA test.... So, this is a very dramatic expansion of the OHIP coverage for the PSA test."

Yesterday, men were still asked to pay from \$30 to \$70 for a PSA test ordered by their primary care practitioner. Why is the McGuinty government still asking men to pay out of pocket for a lab test that they may not be able to afford?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The answer is very clear: The evidence does not support universal screening for PSA. We rely on evidence; increasingly we rely on evidence. As we get the best value for our taxpayer dollars, we are prepared to fund those things that actually improve outcomes for people, but as we move forward, we're going to have to rely increasingly on evidence.

We do fund PSA for men who fall into a high-risk category. It's the right thing to do, just as we're expanding breast cancer screening for high-risk women between the ages of 30 and 49.

The party opposite may want just a carte blanche to fund anything anybody wants; on this side, we take our responsibility as stewards very seriously.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France G  linas: The McGuinty government's promise to cover the cost of PSA tests was crystal clear. Let me quote from the government announcement: "Starting in January, 2009, the cost of a prostate-specific antigen test performed at a community laboratory will be covered under the Ontario health insurance plan when it's ordered by a primary care provider." To make matters worse, depending on where you live, the cost of the test varies widely. This situation is not fair.

Why did the government allow men to believe this test would be covered when, really, according to the minister's words, they had no intention of covering it under OHIP?

1110

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me repeat: The government does now fund PSA tests for men who fall into a certain prescribed, evidence-based category.

I can imagine the member opposite would like to fund lots of things that we simply can't fund. We are determined to rely on evidence because we value our health care system. We need to put our resources where they make a difference for patients.

As we move forward, we will continue to make changes to what is covered and what is not, based on evidence—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East will withdraw the comment that he made.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No. Stand and give an unequivocal withdrawal.

Mr. Paul Miller: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question.

GROWTH PLANNING

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question today for the Minister of Infrastructure. Reining in urban sprawl is a key priority in and around my community of Oakville. In fact, just last month, a group of Burlington residents attending a workshop organized by a local group called BurlingtonGreen called urban sprawl their top environmental concern. I share these concerns, as I know a great many members do. Transitioning toward smarter communities, complete communities, where people can work closer to where they live, is one of the best ways we can minimize the environmental footprint of our communities. Not only that, but complete communities are much better places to live.

Minister, what is our government doing when it comes to urban sprawl in Ontario?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Thank you for the question. The Leader of the Opposition and the Conservative caucus believe that a greenbelt is something you earn at karate or tae kwan do. They have absolutely no plan for uncontrolled growth in our communities.

With our growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe, we're saying no to unplanned growth and uncontrolled urban sprawl. We're promoting complete communities with jobs and homes, healthy communities that will cut down on smog and traffic gridlock. Yet the PCs are against the growth plan, just like they're against the greenbelt, the world's largest greenbelt, protecting an area the size of PEI. And the Leader of the Opposition wants to build a superhighway through it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: That's an encouraging answer, because the evidence continues to mount that urban sprawl is a serious threat to our environment. For example, late last year an organization called QUEST released a report on the connection between climate change and urban sprawl. According to QUEST, our country could reduce yearly greenhouse gas emissions by 12% by 2050 by simply fighting urban sprawl, by building more close-knit communities, by involving public transportation and by helping people live closer to their workplaces.

Minister, given this mounting evidence and that the growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe was released four years ago, what is the status of the implementation?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: First, I'd like to thank the member for his question. He won't ever stop fighting to keep communities across the Halton region safe, clean and sustainable.

We are already seeing the benefits of our growth plan. Municipalities across the greater Golden Horseshoe are implementing our award-winning growth plan. They are designating employment areas where we can create the jobs of tomorrow. They are planning for the complete communities that will be better for Ontario's environment and quality of life. They are designating appropriate rural, agricultural and green areas because, unlike the opposition, municipalities understand how

important it is to plan and grow responsibly. That's good news for our economy, our environment and our communities.

LABORATORY SERVICES

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, last year I raised the issue of access to medical laboratory services throughout my riding. Lab closures in Stayner and Elmvale were having negative impacts on seniors, who endured long lineups, extra costs for parking and up to \$80 to travel to get their blood taken because their local lab was closed. At that time you said you were working to resolve the issue of access to lab services.

Minister, the lab in Elmvale is still closed and it's not clear that the Stayner lab will stay open in perpetuity. I'm not sure what you've been working on, so I'm going to ask you: What have you done to ensure that seniors in my riding have access to lab services?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thanks to the member opposite for this question. It is one that is of concern to me, and I'm very happy that the Stayner lab is open.

We're talking about improving access to care. These community labs are part of that care that people need to rely on. We're asking people with diabetes, for example, to have the testing they need done at the appropriate intervals, so community labs are part of our health care system. That's why we're continuing to work to improve access or maintain access to those community labs.

In the supplementary I will happily speak more about some issues that are important to people.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: It's not just residents in my community who are facing reduced access to laboratory services. Since your government came to office, close to 60 labs have closed across the province and a further 15 have reduced the services that they offer. Half of these reductions and closures are in rural and northern Ontario.

I'm hearing from physicians whose patients don't have access to lab services anymore. These same doctors can't diagnose and treat their patients appropriately as a result. The province-wide contract with lab service providers expired on March 31, as you know, and you seem to have been doing nothing on the issue since.

Minister, will you commit to review the system and bring in real competition to ensure that Ontario's patients and taxpayers are getting the services that they need and the value that they deserve?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said in the initial question, this is an issue that we are currently very much engaged in. I think the people of Ontario have another, much bigger concern, and that is the future of health care in this province.

You know that we've had concerns about the plan of the people opposite. One of your newly nominated candidates, Kevin Gaudet in Pickering-Scarborough East, is quoted in an op-ed in the National Post: "Mr. McGuinty should instead look to alternative delivery models—which include greater private sector involvement—be-

cause no amount of new cash ever seems to be enough under our current health care monopoly." Another quote: "There is no good reason that hip replacements and cancer care can't be equally insured." That's private insurance. This is Kevin Gaudet, your candidate.

My question is: Do you agree with your candidate in Pickering-Scarborough East—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Mount Brydges Sonshine Daycare near London opened its doors in May 2009. The centre is licensed for 10 toddlers and 16 preschool children, ages two and a half to five. It opened with the government's promise that smaller centres like Sonshine Daycare wouldn't be destabilized by a flight of four- and five-year-olds. After giving its word to community-based centres, why did this government decide to turn its back on them?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Actually, our government is very supportive of child care facilities across this province. We are also very excited about our commitment to have full-day kindergarten for four- and five-year-olds by 2014.

We appreciate that that commitment will have an impact on child care facilities across Ontario, and that is why we have set aside dollars for capital to enable those facilities to refit their operations for younger children, and we will continue to work with them to ensure that they have the supports and the resources they need, particularly in communities where there may be, for example, only one child care provider. This is an essential service, and we are doing all that we can to ensure that they are able to continue to provide these excellent services in our communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government's own expert, Charles Pascal, recommended protecting and assisting licensed community-based child care programs. Instead, this government is driving affordable community-based child care centres into deficit, causing fees to rise significantly and forcing some centres to close. Centres like Sonshine Daycare, much to the shock of its board members, some of whom are here today, are left scrambling as the government abandons them. They were told that stabilization funds had been set aside to mitigate any harm to their operations.

Will the minister assure the visiting delegation that there will be the fiscal support promised for this rural child care centre to keep parent fees down and to keep their doors open?

1120

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I did indicate in my first response that our government has committed support for child care facilities right across Ontario. We will be investing, first of all, \$200 million for the full-day kindergarten program. We are also providing capital invest-

ments of \$245 million. Upon full implementation, it will be a \$1.5-billion investment. We have also provided capital funds for child care facilities to enable them to retool their operation and invest in capital investments for their new and younger clients. We will continue to work with child care providers across Ontario. Because of the relationship that we have developed, we have provided additional resources. We know that families value—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Rick Johnson: My question today is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Just a few months ago, this government introduced its much-anticipated long-term affordable housing strategy. In my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, this bill was greeted with much support. It provides the flexibility that municipalities have requested and the commitment to housing that Ontarians expect. That said, there have been comments made by both opposition parties that this bill doesn't go far enough. Could the minister please outline for this House examples of how this just isn't accurate?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank the member for his great advocacy with regard to affordable housing within his own riding. Our legislation, if passed, sets a very—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Hamilton East, please come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Unlike the member from Hamilton East, our legislation has good order attached to it. It sets a strong foundation for a more efficient, accessible system. It's the first of its kind for the province of Ontario. No other government before has gone out and put this type of legislation in place. It puts people first. Isn't that remarkable? The two opposition parties would criticize putting people first. It ensures that we use the resources in a far more efficient way.

I look forward to giving more details about this in my supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Johnson: This long-term affordable housing—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Excuse me. Please continue.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: This long-term affordable housing bill is the first of its kind in Ontario and was greatly anticipated in my riding. My supplementary is again to the Minister of Housing. Since this bill was introduced, both opposition parties have been professing their—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Parkdale-High Park.

The member from Hamilton East is warned. The member from Hamilton East, I would just encourage you that you need to ensure that you have respect for this Chair and respect for this House. A little comment like that isn't respectful to anyone in this place.

Please continue.

Mr. Rick Johnson: During just about every one of the debates, they said that there's no money included and therefore it will not fulfill its purpose. The minister said that we have made unprecedented investments. Could he please touch on those investments and tell this House how those investments will benefit low-income families in my riding?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to ensure that the member from Hamilton East understands that \$2.5 billion have been invested in affordable housing in the province of Ontario. It's the largest investment—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Sergeant-at-Arms, I name Paul Miller, the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller was escorted from the chamber.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: We have built or repaired 260,000 units. We have helped more than 680,000 Ontarians. We continue to provide \$430 million annually in affordable housing.

This legislation will ensure that we maximize the potential of our investments. That's why I encourage the two opposition parties, very shortly from now, to support this legislation. Show that you care about—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a question for the Minister of Finance. Minister, the sunshine list is supposed to make the public sector more open and accountable to taxpayers, but a recent Martin Regg Cohn article reveals that at the Ontario Financing Authority, the board decided that traders shouldn't pay the price for a tough financial situation, which meant that when the performance targets weren't met, they decided to sweeten the pot.

Minister, can you tell us what other agencies take part in this practice?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I wouldn't characterize the situation that the member described the way he has, first of all.

I will say this: Across the public and broader public sectors, professionals are routinely engaged that fall outside of the normal limits. The ones that come to mind are highly specialized skill sets: chartered accountants, lawyers and so on. Those get all of the appropriate approvals.

At the Ontario Financing Authority, for instance, we have to employ bond traders. We pay about half of the going rate that these same people could get in the private sector. So the board of the Ontario Financing Authority, working with outside advice, routinely sets pay packages

that are well below the private sector for the same jobs but also allow us to maintain the people in those positions who are very dedicated—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Well, Minister, there does seem to be a disconnect between the public and the private sector. In the real world, when times are tough and an employee doesn't make a performance target, guess what? They don't get the bonus. But at the Ontario Financing Authority, the top civil servant—who makes more than half a million dollars a year—together with other board members, decided that 14 senior employees who didn't qualify for bonuses because they didn't meet their performance targets should get a better deal.

Minister, why bother having performance targets at all? Don't you think that the public sector should expect to meet the same standard that the private sector does?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, those employees are paid about one half of what their counterparts in the private sector are paid. I would remind the member opposite that, in fact, the packages that are paid today were established by the previous government.

It is a difficult issue. We have to wrestle with these very highly skilled people, who, by the way, are dedicated public servants. They make less than they could by simply walking two miles down the street to go to work on Bay Street—

Interjection.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Well, many of them do, eventually, because of what I would call the cheap antics that are thrown their way by people not being particularly thoughtful about these challenges.

We maintain the policy that was established by the Harris-Eves government. It is the appropriate policy for compensation for these highly—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Acting Premier. Acting Premier, the Ontario Legislature has been a symbol of our province's democracy for 118 years. Last year, the OMB allowed the construction of a building at 21 Avenue Road that would permanently destroy the skyline of the Ontario Legislature. The valiant efforts of the Speaker of this Legislature were not enough to protect this historic view.

Acting Premier, do you agree that the historic vista of the Ontario Legislature should be protected?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I would remind the member opposite that, in 2005, our government strengthened the Ontario Heritage Act. We were the first government in 30 years to do so. The act gives municipalities the power to protect heritage properties in their community. Since we strengthened the act, municipalities have protected over 4,600 properties.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Toronto city council passed it. The NDP had the majority.

1130

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In the case of 21 Avenue Road, the Divisional Court has turned down a request to appeal a decision by the Ontario Municipal Board. I have to respect the court's decision in this matter. The city has made its decision—as my colleague indicates, at the time, it was an NDP council that dominated—the OMB has made its decision and the court has made its decision. These are all important institutions that serve the public. We have to respect the decision of these boards.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to salute you on your valiant efforts on this particular issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: There was a lot of blah, blah, blah in that answer. The Acting Premier would know that, in the Ontario Heritage Act, the minister could declare a provincial interest. Clearly, you're not taking advantage of that act.

The Ontario Municipal Board—the provincial body under your jurisdiction—allowed the construction of 21 Avenue because there is no legal framework to protect the Legislature's historic view. It's up to the provincial government to step in and protect the Ontario Legislature.

The OMB already stated that if you had an interest, if you had stated an interest, they would have been able to do something. But in the absence of any legal framework from you, the Premier or any other minister, they could do absolutely nothing.

When are you, the Premier or any other minister going to step in and protect this important historic view and this historic site?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I remind the member opposite that the city of Toronto council dealt with this, the Ontario Municipal Board dealt with this and the Divisional Court dealt with this. The member is simply wrong. There has been a full process, due process established by law. The government has acted appropriately in all steps, has used appropriate authorities to act in the interest of all Ontarians, and we have to respect the very processes that were set up by this Legislature.

Unfortunately, these disputes come about from time to time. Sometimes remedies are available; other times they are not. The government is satisfied that the process has been appropriately followed and that the appropriate authorities have rendered their decisions. That still means, though, that this is one magnificent building, one that I think we can all continue to be proud of.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham, I've been hearing from many students and young people concerned about the effects of climate change and its impact on the air that we breathe.

Last Friday, I attended the York Region Environmental Film Festival with some 200 Catholic secondary school students. It focused on important issues to those of

us working and living on and around the Oak Ridges moraine.

The participants wanted to know about our government's commitment to plant 50 million trees by 2020. Minister, what progress has the government made towards this goal, ensuring clean air for our children and grandchildren?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to thank the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for her question and assure her that tremendous progress has been made towards meeting the goal.

In the member's riding, there are three conservation authorities—the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority and the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority—who, in partnership with Trees Ontario, have planted 176,000 trees in this area alone.

The member might also be interested to know that the 50 million tree program is the most ambitious project of its kind in North America and the single-largest commitment to the United Nations Billion Tree Campaign.

Working with some 65 tree-planting organizations across this province, including conservation authorities and the MNR's stewardship groups, the 50 million tree program is restoring southern Ontario's landscape one tree at a time.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Earlier in question period, there was a question to me. The member from Nickel Belt quoted from a news release. Unfortunately, she left off what was—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, you cannot correct someone else's record. That's not a point of order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. The member from Renfrew. Order. Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Member from Barrie. Minister of Consumer Services. Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like all members to join me—seated in the members' gallery is Mr. Jim Stephenson, father of Christopher Stephenson. Jim, welcome to Queen's Park today.

DEFERRED VOTES

SECURITIES INDUSTRY

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on the amendment by Mr. Miller, Parry Sound–Muskoka, to the motion by Ms. Broten to locate the new common securities regulator in Toronto.

Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1136 to 1141.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members please take their seats.

Mr. Miller, Parry Sound–Muskoka, has moved that the motion be amended by deleting the words “endorses the Open Ontario plan to grow our financial services industry by calling” and substituting therefor the word “calls.”

All those in favour of Mr. Miller’s amendment will rise one at a time.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hampton, Howard	Miller, Norm
Bailey, Robert	Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia
Barrett, Toby	Horwath, Andrea	O’Toole, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Clark, Steve	Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael
DiNovo, Cheri	Kormos, Peter	Tabuns, Peter
Dunlop, Garfield	MacLeod, Lisa	Wilson, Jim
Elliott, Christine	Marchese, Rosario	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gélinas, France	Martiniuk, Gerry	Yakubski, John

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Gerretsen, John	Murray, Glen R.
Balkissoon, Bas	Gravelle, Michael	Naqvi, Yasir
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoskins, Eric	Oraziotti, David
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Best, Margaret	Jaczek, Helena	Pupatello, Sandra
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brownell, Jim	Johnson, Rick	Ramal, Khalil
Cansfield, Donna H.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Carroll, Aileen	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Chiarelli, Bob	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Mangat, Amrit	Sandals, Liz
Craiton, Kim	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Crozier, Bruce	Mauro, Bill	Sousa, Charles
Delaney, Bob	McMeekin, Ted	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilkinson, John
Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John	Zimmer, David
Duncan, Dwight	Mitchell, Carol	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Moridi, Reza	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 27; the nays are 52.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the amendment lost.

Amendment negatived.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is the House ready to vote on the main motion? I’ve heard a no.

STRONG COMMUNITIES THROUGH AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 FAVORISANT DES COLLECTIVITÉS FORTES GRÂCE AU LOGEMENT ABORDABLE

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 140, An Act to enact the Housing Services Act, 2011, repeal the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 140, Loi édictant la Loi de 2011 sur les services de logement, abrogeant la Loi de 2000 sur la réforme du logement social et apportant des modifications corrélatives et autres à d’autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1144 to 1145.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On April 13, 2011, Mr. Bartolucci moved third reading of Bill 140. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Gerretsen, John	Milloy, John
Arnott, Ted	Gélinas, France	Mitchell, Carol
Bailey, Robert	Gravelle, Michael	Moridi, Reza
Balkissoon, Bas	Hampton, Howard	Munro, Julia
Barrett, Toby	Hardeman, Ernie	Murray, Glen R.
Bartolucci, Rick	Horwath, Andrea	Naqvi, Yasir
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoskins, Eric	O’Toole, John
Best, Margaret	Hoy, Pat	Oraziotti, David
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Brownell, Jim	Jeffrey, Linda	Phillips, Gerry
Cansfield, Donna H.	Johnson, Rick	Prue, Michael
Carroll, Aileen	Jones, Sylvia	Pupatello, Sandra
Chiarelli, Bob	Klees, Frank	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chudleigh, Ted	Kormos, Peter	Ramal, Khalil
Clark, Steve	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Craiton, Kim	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony
Crozier, Bruce	MacLeod, Lisa	Sandals, Liz
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Smith, Monique
DiNovo, Cheri	Marchese, Rosario	Sousa, Charles
Dombrowsky, Leona	Martiniuk, Gerry	Takhar, Harinder S.
Duguid, Brad	Matthews, Deborah	Wilkinson, John
Duncan, Dwight	Mauro, Bill	Wilson, Jim
Dunlop, Garfield	McMeekin, Ted	Witmer, Elizabeth
Elliott, Christine	Meilleur, Madeleine	Yakubski, John
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Miller, Norm	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):

The ayes are 78; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

CHRISTOPHER’S LAW (SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY) AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI CHRISTOPHER SUR LE REGISTRE DES DÉLINQUANTS SEXUELS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 163, An Act to amend Christopher’s Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

Interjections: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 78; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

I'd just like to remind the members of a reception taking place this evening with the Ontario Craft Brewers and the Alliance of Ontario Food Processors. Please join us from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. in room 228/230.

There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1148 to 1500.

ESTIMATES

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I have a message from the Honourable David C. Onley, the Lieutenant Governor, signed by his own hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending March 31, 2012, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Dated April 18, 2011.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Frank Klees: Earlier today, we had the pleasure of a tour by a class from Light of Christ School in Aurora. Unfortunately, I was committed to a caucus meeting and so wasn't able to meet with the students, but I wanted to take this opportunity to express our welcome to them. We will be sending the class a copy of the Hansard record of their MPP recognizing the fact that they were here in the assembly with us.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Speaker provided some assistance to the honourable member. I had the opportunity to welcome your students as well.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RIVERSIDE BUICK GMC

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise today to recognize Riverside Buick GMC: not only one of the great employers in the town of Prescott in my riding of Leeds–Grenville, but truly one of the finest corporate citizens you'll find anywhere in Ontario.

Last week, the dealership's owners, Stuart and Stephen Birnie and Ted MacMillan, were the proud recipients of the 2011 Employer Champion Award for their outstanding contribution to co-operative education. Riverside is one of just four employers in the province recognized with this award. It's a fitting tribute to the dealership, which has been opening its doors and hearts to co-op students for more than 20 years. Throughout that time, Riverside staff have made sure those students got a real sense of what a career in the automotive world involves.

Many of the Riverside graduates have gone on to fulfilling careers in the industry, some even working in the dealership itself.

As South Grenville District High School grade 12 co-op student Michael Tracey said at last week's awards ceremony in Kemptville, "I've done everything from rebuilding an engine to changing oil."

For students like Michael, the meaningful co-op experience provided by businesses like Riverside can be nothing short of life-changing.

It's really no surprise that Riverside has been recognized for its contribution to co-op education. Giving back to the Prescott and area community is a philosophy that the business has exemplified since it was purchased by Gus Birnie in 1978. You'll find them quietly sponsoring events large and small in Prescott, from local sports teams to the annual Leo Boivin Midget Showcase to the town's annual Loyalist Days weekend.

In those 33 years, the dealership has grown to become the largest GM dealer in Leeds–Grenville and now employs 30 people.

Today, I hope all MPPs join me in congratulating Riverside Buick GMC, which has truly earned its reputation, "The little dealer with the big heart."

ELMIRA SUGAR KINGS

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Today, it's my pleasure to announce another exceptional triumph in Woolwich township.

The Elmira Sugar Kings of the Greater Ontario Junior Hockey League are the pride of Kitchener–Conestoga as they represent our community at the Sutherland Cup.

First awarded in 1934, the Sutherland Cup is the next major goal of the Sugar Kings. They've recently been crowned the Cherrey Cup champions of the league's midwestern division under the outstanding leadership of: the club president, Jeff Seddon; the general manager, Keith Stewart; the coach, Geoff Haddaway; and his three assistant coaches, Kyle Campbell, Kyle Rank and Brad Nickel.

Of course, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the team captains: Josh Woolley, Jarred Parent, Shane Smith and Lukas Beleshta.

The Sugar Kings are facing the Niagara Falls Canucks and the St. Thomas Stars in the Sutherland Cup round robin final.

Behind any good team, of course, are the unsung heroes who work hard and who continue to make the team a success. For the Sugar Kings, this is the booster club—the volunteers and the parents who support the team. That includes Tracey Bartlett, Debbie Bowman, Marilyn Craig, Karen Good, Sandy Mann, Marylou Murray, Alva Cummings, Deb Farr, Lois Fisher, Anne Hanley, Donna Martin and Cathy Nearingburg.

The Sugar Kings are celebrating their 40th year in operation. They're a true example of the character of our community: hard-working, resilient and committed to fair play. The puck drops for the next game tomorrow in the Woolwich Memorial Centre at 7:30. All the best to the Elmira Sugar Kings.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Go, St. Thomas Stars, go!

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Toby Barrett: As people across the province join with those the world over to celebrate and champion efforts to protect our third planet from the sun on Earth Day, we in Ontario are left wondering if the government is even paying attention.

In Ontario, while the McGuinty headlines may be green, once the photo op is over, the failing results are plain as black and white. This is a government that blows hard about its favourite dirty coal scapegoat while, behind the scenes, increasing the output of that same coal electrical generation by 29% last year over 2009. We've seen waste diversion rates falling to less than half the government goal two years past the mandated deadline, electronics recycling programs reaching only 2% of their diversion targets and eco taxes throwing support for environmental stewardship into reverse—all of this while we await a promised new Waste Diversion Act that's gone MIA.

The promise of new legislation was former Environment Minister Gerretsen's Earth Day present to us last year. It turns out that when we got past the green ribbons and the green bows, the gift box was empty. Will the new minister have more empty promises for us this year? Where is the new Waste Diversion Act, and how many tonnes of landfill have gone undiverted while the minister dithers?

On Earth Day, I encourage people to pitch in and work towards the clean earth goals the government seems unable or unwilling to achieve.

SUMMIT PLACE TAVERN

Mr. Peter Kormos: Like most members, when I'm back home on the weekend, I'm out there with my federal candidate, campaigning. I'm luckier than most because I've got Malcolm Allen, who of course is an elected member of the federal Parliament and has done a great job over the course of the last two, almost three, years, and is working hard to earn re-election—and is doing a fine job at that, too.

Where did we end up on Sunday but in Thorold, at the Summit Place Tavern in downtown Thorold, the heart of Thorold. It's the third Sunday of the month, usually, that they have their Koliba night. That's their Slovak pub night. Of course, Joe Vargovič and his wonderful family—his wife, Hana, who's one of the best cooks I've ever met, and his sons, two great guys, Joe Jr. and Peter—have been operating this little place in its historic location for a good number of years.

The place was packed. The food was great. I had the halushky. Halushky, for those of you who don't know, is the crack cocaine of ethnic food: When you've eaten it once, you're compelled to eat it over and over and over again.

I just want to thank Joe Vargovič and Hana for the cooking, and Peter for his hospitality. Stephen Reistetter, my old friend, was there with some of the members of

the vesely hrvati, playing music—and Stephen's so multi-talented: vocals, violin, as well as mandolin.

Thank you, Joe Vargovič. Thank you to the Summit Place Tavern. I'll be out there again with Malcolm Allen this weekend.

NATIONAL SOIL
CONSERVATION WEEK

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge National Soil Conservation Week. This week highlights accomplishments in the field of sustainable soil protection across the country and recognizes the important work being done by our farmers, farm organizations and producers.

We know that Ontario's farmers are excellent stewards of the land and that scientists at the University of Guelph have been working on soil conservation for many decades. Since 2003, government and farmers have worked together to implement over 20,000 best-management practices to help protect and improve Ontario's soil and water resources.

Our government is also contributing to scientific innovation. Through the OMAFRA-University of Guelph partnership, the ministry has invested in over 20 soil conservation projects, ranging from the development of best practices to the impact of fertilization on soils.

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I urge all members of this House to join me in celebrating National Soil Conservation Week and give credit to the producers and their organizations, such as the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association and Innovative Farmers of Ontario, which are dedicated advocates in the province for soil conservation. Why? Because we all understand that the future of agriculture depends on keeping our soil resources viable for future generations.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. John O'Toole: This morning, I spoke to the Minister of Natural Resources, and I was assured that she was very familiar with the issue that's occurring in my riding of Durham.

The Toronto Star's article is the best recap of that. It says, "Stray Bullets Terrify Durham Residents." My residents Ted and Kipp Wilson and their family are very concerned about this issue, and I am aware today that ministry representatives, as well as local mayor Chuck Mercier, have convened a meeting with Durham Regional Police and other police enforcement agencies to deal with this issue on some crown land in my riding of Durham, in the township of Scugog.

This is very important. It's a public safety issue, and I'm confident that the Minister of Natural Resources is aware of it and is responding appropriately. But when it comes to the endangerment of families and property—this is a case where, in this instance, the home was damaged with what is reported in the media as .44 magnum

shells being found around the site, as well as other evidence of damage to public property in an area where there should not be discharging firearms.

I'm anxious to report to the House, on behalf of my constituents Ted and Kipp Wilson, that the minister is aware of the issue. I'm confident that there will be a solution found, and public safety will be restored.

THUNDER BAY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Mr. Bill Mauro: Last Thursday, April 14, 2011, one of Thunder Bay's best-kept secrets celebrated its 40th anniversary. The Thunder Bay Community Foundation has been distributing grants, scholarships and bursaries since it was founded in 1971 by an act of the Ontario Legislature.

First established by an anonymous donation of \$100,000, it was only very recently that the foundation was able to publicly acknowledge this act of generosity upon the death of Mrs. Prue Morton, who had insisted that her donation remain silent until she had passed. This initial contribution of Mrs. Prue Morton has now grown to over \$6 million in assets, and it has allowed the foundation to distribute over \$3 million in grants, scholarships and bursaries to 347 students and 228 charitable organizations.

I want to thank the sponsors of this year's 40th anniversary and offer a special thank you to the board of trustees, including President Deborah de Bakker, Art Warwick, Rosy Brizi, Shannon Gothard Ramirez, Mark Wright, Maria Hudolin, Bonnie Moore, Tere McDonald and Rob Mozzon, as well as Executive Director Paul Wolfe and Dina Marsico. Their contribution and effort, along with past trustees and donors, has honoured the legacy of Mrs. Prue Morton and allowed this foundation to thrive and flourish.

I am sure that this homemade Thunder Bay success story will continue to serve the interests of our community for years to come.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Jim Brownell: Today I wish to recognize the tremendous work done by our government and by my colleague the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Honourable Carol Mitchell. The announcement in this year's budget of a permanent risk management program, RMP as we know it, is good news for Ontario's farmers and farm families. However, the real credit for this program goes to the farm groups who put the proposal together. This was farm-driven.

I had the great pleasure to welcome and host Minister Mitchell in my riding in 2010 to meet with local farmers and leaders of the local Federation of Agriculture to discuss risk management programs. My brother, a beef producer and member of the OFA and the Stormont Cattlemen's Association, and other farmers like him know that risk management is a good incentive for the next generation of young farmers, who will continue

agricultural practices in our province. RMP gives them some of the stability required as they look into the future.

Now we have a commitment from the farmers, and we have a commitment from the province of Ontario, but there is one partner that is not at the table. We need the federal government to come to the table. Agriculture is a federal and provincial responsibility. Farmers are in. The province is in. Now it's the federal government's turn to act and to get in this too.

MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

Mr. David Ramsay: I'm very pleased to give the House an update on some of the very exciting development that's going on in the very north end of my riding, right on the 49th parallel at Cochrane. Because of a gold mine development further up, Cochrane is benefiting from the Detour Lake gold mine, which is really exciting for the whole region, including the neighbouring riding.

Cochrane has applied for and received some money from the Ontario government to build a new road so that they can properly offload supplies and equipment off the Ontario Northland Railway yard to Detour Lake Road so that they don't have to go through all the subdivisions in town and also disrupt Commando Lake, which is where the water supply for the town is housed. The town is very pleased to hear that news, and of course Detour mine itself is going to contribute to that project.

Also, the town wants to expand the airport facilities because some of this equipment will be flown in and flown back out further north. So the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. has granted money to the tune of \$716,000 for the town for expansions. Also, a local business at the airport site is going to build its own heated hangar. It received \$125,000.

So it's very exciting up there. It's nice to see some positive development—41 jobs created and many more up the road as the mine develops over the next few months.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Jeff Leal: I beg leave to present the first report 2011, from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Leal presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have no brief statement, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Leal moves the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

OMBUDSMAN STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT (DESIGNATED PUBLIC BODIES), 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI A TRAIT À L'OMBUDSMAN (ORGANISMES PUBLICS DÉSIGNÉS)

Mr. Marchese moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 183, An Act to amend the Ombudsman Act and the Police Services Act with respect to investigating designated public bodies / *Projet de loi 183, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'ombudsman et la Loi sur les services policiers en ce qui a trait aux enquêtes au sujet des organismes publics désignés.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The bill amends the Ombudsman Act and the Police Services Act to give power to the Ombudsman to do anything it may do with respect to a governmental organization under the Ombudsman Act to a university, hospital, long-term-care home, school board, children's aid society, retirement home and the Office of the Independent Police Review Director.

COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY STUDENT ASSOCIATIONS ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LES ASSOCIATIONS ÉTUDIANTES DES COLLÈGES ET DES UNIVERSITÉS

Mr. Naqvi moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 184, An Act respecting student associations at post-secondary educational institutions in Ontario / *Projet de loi 184, Loi sur les associations étudiantes constituées au sein des établissements d'enseignement postsecondaire de l'Ontario.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: The College and University Student Associations Act, 2011, or CUSA Act, is co-sponsored with me by the member from Trinity-Spadina. It's enacted to recognize the autonomy of student associations

at post-secondary educational institutions, to provide for the good governance of student associations, to require accountability of student associations to their members, to promote collaboration and agreement between student associations and post-secondary educational institutions, and to ensure the collection and remittance by post-secondary educational institutions of fees levied by student associations.

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PETITIONS

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition from my riding of Durham, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas industrial wind turbine developments have raised concerns among citizens over health, safety and property values;

"Whereas the Green Energy Act allows wind turbine developments to bypass meaningful public input and municipal approvals;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment revise the Green Energy Act to allow full public input and municipal approvals on all industrial wind farm developments and that a moratorium on wind development be declared until an independent, epidemiological study is completed into the health and environmental impacts of industrial wind turbines" in Ontario.

I'm pleased to sign and support it on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham, and present it to Jimmy in his last week here as a page.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas agriculture plays an important role in Ontario's economy, and strong, prosperous farms mean a strong prosperous Ontario;

"Whereas the establishment of a risk management program was the single most important action the provincial government could have done to help ensure the economic success of Ontario's non-supply-managed commodities;

"Whereas agriculture is a federal and provincial responsibility, and yet the federal government has refused to act and come to the table with their support;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We applaud the Ontario government's support of risk management programs and encourage the federal government to partner with the province and its farmers to support the risk management programs put in place by the province to bring much-needed stability, predictability and bankability to Ontario's agricultural sector."

I agree with this and I will affix my signature.

PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas supported-living residents in southwestern and eastern Ontario were subjected to picketing outside their homes during labour strikes in 2007 and 2009; and

"Whereas residents and neighbours had to endure megaphones, picket lines, portable bathrooms and shining lights at all hours of the day and night on their streets; and

"Whereas individuals with intellectual disabilities and organizations who support them fought for years to break down barriers and live in inclusive communities; and

"Whereas Bill 83 passed second reading in the Ontario Legislature on October 28, 2010;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government quickly schedule hearings for Sylvia Jones's Bill 83, the Protecting Vulnerable People Against Picketing Act, to allow for public hearings."

I obviously support this petition, am pleased to affix my name to it and give it to page Kiruthika.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all Ontarians have the right to a safe home environment; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario works to reduce all barriers in place that prevent victims of domestic violence from fleeing abusive situations; and

"Whereas the Residential Tenancies Act does not take into consideration the special circumstances facing a tenant who is suffering from abuse; and

"Whereas those that live in fear for their personal safety and that of their children should not be financially penalized for the early termination of their residential leases;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Bill 53, the Escaping Domestic Violence Act, 2010, be adopted so that victims of domestic violence be afforded a mechanism for the early termination of their lease to allow them to leave an abusive relationship and find a safe place for themselves and their children to call home."

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition, affix my signature and send it to the table via page Jimmy.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a number of petitions that came from the township of Matachewan in the riding of Timiskaming-Cochrane, and they read:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

"Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

"Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

"Whereas the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka's private member's Bill 100 provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka's private member's Bill 100, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

Of course, I support this petition.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm pleased to present this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of my colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex:

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I support this petition and affix my signature, and I send it to the table with page Sydney.

RURAL SCHOOLS

Mr. Jim Wilson: "Petition to Save Duntroon Central Public School and All Other Rural Schools in Clearview Township:

"Whereas Duntroon Central Public School is an important part of Clearview township and the surrounding area; and

"Whereas Duntroon Central Public School is widely recognized for its high educational standards and intimate learning experience; and

"Whereas the frameworks of rural schools are different from urban schools and therefore deserve to be governed by a separate rural school policy; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised during the 2007 election that he would keep rural schools open when he declared that, 'Rural schools help keep communities strong, which is why we're not only committed to keeping them open—but strengthening them'; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty found \$12 million to keep school swimming pools open in Toronto but hasn't found any money to keep rural schools open in Simcoe-Grey;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Education support the citizens of Clearview township and suspend the Simcoe County District School Board ARC 2010:01 until the province develops a rural school policy that recognizes the value of schools in the rural communities of Ontario."

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Rick Johnson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I agree with this petition, I affix my signature and I pass it off to Kiruthika.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

"Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known and universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health agrees to proceed with clinical trials of the venoplasty treatment to fully explore its potential to bring relief to the thousands of Ontarians afflicted with multiple sclerosis."

I'll affix my signature and send it to the table with page Jimmy.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

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"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: A petition to restore medical laboratory services in Elmvale. I want to thank Focus Elmvale for sending it to me.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the consolidation of medical laboratories in rural areas is causing people to travel further and wait longer for services; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the Ontario government to ensure that Ontarians have equal access to all health care services; and

"Whereas rural Ontario continues to get shortchanged when it comes to health care: doctor shortages, smaller hospitals, less pharmaceutical services, lack of transportation and now medical laboratory services; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government continues to increase taxes to make up for misspent tax dollars, collecting \$15 billion over the last six years from the Liberal health tax, ultimately forcing Ontarians to pay more while receiving less;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government stop the erosion of public health care services and ensure equal access to medical laboratories for all Ontarians, including the people of Elmvale."

I will sign this petition, and I certainly agree with it.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas pursuant to the Champlain Community Care Access Centre, there are currently 825 patients on the waiting list for the 11 long-term-care homes in the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry counties, including Akwesasne; and

"Whereas from those 825 patients on the waiting list, 685 are for Cornwall homes; and

"Whereas 54 beds at the Cornwall Community Hospital are dedicated to acute care patients; and

"Whereas because of these 54 beds being dedicated to acute care patients, there are 54 fewer beds committed to Cornwall residents requiring surgeries and regular procedures, thereby creating a longer wait time; and

"Whereas as our population ages and the baby boomers grow older the number of patients requiring long-term-care beds will only increase; and

"Whereas in response to these concerns, AMO's board of directors recently commissioned a long-term-care discussion paper;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To increase long-term-care homes in the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry counties, including Akwesasne."

I shall sign this and send it to the clerks' table.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to get one more petition in today. It reads as follows:

"Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and a duty to protect the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier government to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permit process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries; and

"Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to prevent contamination of the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt.

I'm pleased to sign it, support it and present it to Kiruthika.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm pleased I've got a petition today from farm families from Marysville, Napanee, Bancroft and Toronto.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas agriculture plays an important role in Ontario's economy, and strong, prosperous farms mean a strong, prosperous Ontario; and

"Whereas the establishment of a risk management program was the single most important action the provincial government could have done to help ensure the economic success of Ontario's non-supply-managed commodities; and

"Whereas agriculture is a federal and provincial responsibility, and yet the federal government has refused to act and come to the table with their support;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We applaud the Ontario government's support of risk management programs and encourage the federal government to partner with the province and its farmers to support the risk management programs put in place by the province to bring much-needed stability, predictability and bankability to Ontario's agricultural sector."

I agree wholeheartedly with this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to page Ciaran.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas agriculture plays an important role in Ontario's economy and deserves investment;

"Whereas PC MPP Bob Bailey has introduced a significant tax credit for farmers who donate agricultural goods to food banks, helping farmers, food banks and people in need; and

"Whereas over 25 million pounds of fresh produce is disposed of or plowed back into Ontario's fields each year while food banks across Ontario struggle to feed those in need;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call MPP Bob Bailey's private member's bill, Bill 78, the Taxation Amendment Act (Food Bank Donation Tax Credit for Farmers), 2010, to committee immediately for consideration and then on to third reading and implementation without delay."

I agree with the petition, will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Grace.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUILDING FAMILIES AND SUPPORTING YOUTH TO BE SUCCESSFUL ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 FAVORISANT LA FONDATION DE FAMILLES ET LA RÉUSSITE CHEZ LES JEUNES

Ms. Smith, on behalf of Ms. Broten, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 179, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act respecting adoption and the provision of care

and maintenance / *Projet de loi 179, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille en ce qui concerne l'adoption et les soins et l'entretien.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'll be sharing my time this afternoon with the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. But before I cede the floor to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, I have a few things I'd like to say about this legislation. It is a great privilege for me to stand in the House today to support the Building Families and Supporting Youth to be Successful Act, 2011.

This legislation is the next step in our government's commitment to improve Ontario's adoption system. If passed, it will help people build their families and help children in the province's care find loving, permanent homes, because there's nothing more critical, Mr. Speaker—as I'm sure you're aware and members of the House are aware—and more fundamental to a child's well-being than knowing that he or she will always have a place to call home.

In 2006, our government introduced changes to increase the number of children growing up in permanent homes, including through adoption. These changes included establishing a standardized home study and important changes to how our CASs are funded. Since then, fewer kids are coming into children's aid society care and more kids are getting the chance to succeed in permanent homes. We continue to work with adoption organizations and community partners to strengthen Ontario's child protection system and help all Ontario children reach their full potential.

If passed, the Building Families and Supporting Youth to be Successful Act, 2011, along with these other changes, will make it easier for a child to get adopted in Ontario and for would-be parents to adopt a child. It's a win-win situation for adoptive parents who wait to open their hearts and homes to a child and for the children who need a loving, stable and permanent home.

As I'm sure you are aware, there are currently about 9,000 crown wards in the care of children's aid societies across the province. These are children and youth who have moved from place to place, from school to school, and over 80% of those have special needs.

We all know that the best chance of success for a child is a safe, stable and permanent family. Research indicates that kids who are adopted or provided with the permanency of a long-term home have significantly better outcomes compared to those who remain in care. Adopted children are almost 25% more likely to complete high school and 50% more likely to continue school at the post-secondary level.

Unfortunately, three out of four kids in care have access orders that legally prevent them from being placed for adoption. An access order is a legal order that prescribes how much and what type of contact the child has with significant people in their lives, including their birth family. Access orders have prevented young people from being adopted in Ontario for more than 30 years. If our legislation passes, this will be fixed. Our government must make it easier to bring these children and the

parents who are waiting to adopt together. These young people deserve a place to call home. They deserve to be cared for by loving parents.

This new legislation, if passed, will mean an access order would terminate automatically when a child is placed for adoption. In cases where it would be in the best interest to maintain some contact with their birth family or another person after adoption, and the child consents, the court may make an openness order. In the case of a number of private adoptions, there is usually an openness order, and I'm very familiar with that system, as two of the most important people in my life have come to our family through adoption, and that's why it's so important for me today to speak to this and to speak to the importance of moving forward with these changes to the adoption rules.

The changes do not stop with openness orders. We have heard from adoptive and prospective adoptive parents about what they need to make it easier to adopt a child in Ontario.

1540

As a result, we're doubling the number of Adoption Resource Exchange conferences that are held annually across the province from two to four. This is an opportunity where we bring families together with prospective children, and they are allowed to find out information about what children are being cared for by the crown and what children are available for adoption. They've been very successful in matching prospective adoptive families with children. It's one of those innovative ways that we're bringing families together. We want to expand that because we've seen the success from that.

We've also heard from adoptive and prospective adoptive families that they'd like reliable information, no matter what adoption stream they are interested in: public, private or international. They want the information, and so we are proposing that we will develop an easy-to-navigate online information system so that adoptive parents can determine which adoption option is right for them.

Our government has also heard from children's aid societies. I work very closely with my local CAS. Hats off to Gisèle Hébert, who's my executive director at home, and all of the hard workers at the North Bay-Parry Sound children's aid society, who are doing a tremendous amount of great work in sometimes cramped quarters and are providing great care to our children across what is a very large region in our area.

We have 1,500 families across the province who are waiting for home studies to be completed. A home study, as many of you who are familiar with the adoption process know, is an assessment process between the prospective adoptive parents and a qualified adoption practitioner, usually a social worker. It determines whether parents are prepared and suitable to adopt, and it provides the basis on which the adoption moves forward. Right now, there's presently a backlog of 1,500 of these assessments, and that's unacceptable. We want to work closely with our CASs to get this number down to ensure

that home studies are done without delay and that we set up standard timelines for home studies in the public system so that we know that these studies are being done in a timely way and parents are not being held up by this part of the system.

With respect to our aboriginal children—and we have a number of aboriginal children in care, particularly in my region and further north of my region—we recognize that customary care is a way for children to find permanent homes. Customary care is the care and supervision of an aboriginal child by a person who is not the child's parent according to the custom of the child's band or native community. Each community defines its own traditions. We will work with the CASs and the First Nations to increase the use of these arrangements so that more aboriginal children and youth are able to stay connected to their communities, their culture and their traditions. We know how important that is for a successful placement for them to stay connected to their communities, their culture and their traditions.

We're also planning to build on the innovative steps being taken by CASs that are providing subsidies to make it possible for some families to adopt. There are a number of CASs that are working on innovative projects and ideas on how to better place children, how to get them through the system more quickly and how to get them out of crown care and into permanent homes.

One such example is a proposal that my CAS—that I referred to just a moment ago, the North Bay-Parry Sound children's aid society—is working on and has proposed to our government. It's a system where they want to look at how we can get children placed as quickly as possible. It has been adopted in a couple of jurisdictions in North America—one in the States and one, I think, in British Columbia—where they've put together a team that looks after one particular child. They engage former police officers and private investigators. They determine all of the potential family links that that child has—second cousins, great-aunts. They identify all of those potential relatives that they have; then they stream that down to potential families that could take this child. Many of these families were not even aware that the child existed in certain circumstances. They allow for the bringing together of these relatives with the prospective adoptive child. It's a really great system. It has worked very well in certain jurisdictions. There are some limitations around it that need to be worked out, but it's one that my CAS at home is looking at perhaps adopting in a pilot way, to determine what the limitations are in the Ontario context and what the success rates are of bringing these children into care with a relative, which, we all know, has a high rate of stick-to-it-iveness where the families are very successfully matched together.

We want to make sure that all of these various innovative options are being looked at through this legislation and our co-operation with our CASs. We're looking at a number of options and a number of ways of bringing these families together.

I'm not going to take too much time today, but it was important for me to speak to this legislation because it is

an important part of my life. My niece and nephew are both adopted. They're a fantastic part of our lives. I get choked up when I talk about it. People say to us that the kids are so lucky to have us; I say we're so lucky to have them. I know that there are many other families out there who are interested in forming a family this way. I think it's very important that we make it as easy as possible to let these families come together and form a permanent basis of home for these kids.

I hope that the members opposite will consider this good legislation. I think it's an excellent move forward for our CASs and for our adoption system in the province, and I am sure that we will have lots of time to discuss it over the coming weeks.

I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this discussion today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: I want to thank the member from Nipissing, the government House leader, for her opening comments. As you can see in her comments about her own family, where there have been a couple of adoptions, it's something that makes us all reflect on people who we know who are adopted or who have adopted children, and how much it really moves us all to think of the importance of these families that have the courage and have the generosity of heart to adopt children, and what a critical role they play in building this province and building these homes for these children who don't have access to their natural birth parents.

I'm here today speaking at this point in time because the minister is at a conference in Fort William First Nation in Thunder Bay; it's the very first aboriginal child welfare summit. This summit, hosted by the minister and her aboriginal adviser, John Beaucage, is an important milestone towards improving the lives of First Nations and aboriginal children and youth. I know that Ms. Broten is very, very passionate about this issue and she's very passionate about the work she's doing today in Fort William. I'm just going to try to pinch-hit in her place here today to bring this new legislation into perspective for the members of the House and the public.

Bill 179 is the Building Families and Supporting Youth to be Successful Act, 2011. As the member from Nipissing said, if passed, this bill will help build better lives for children in the province's care and will help them find loving and permanent homes. The thousands of families who want nothing more than to build their families through adoption will be helped by this bill, and the thousands of kids who want nothing more than to know that they will always have a place to call home are also the keystone of this legislation.

We know that if we are going to improve the welfare of all children, especially the welfare of aboriginal children, we need to take a holistic approach. We have to recognize that the community plays a central role in the life of a child and the child is the circle of the community, the centre of the community. We all want a better future for all of our children, especially our aboriginal children. The legislation I'm speaking to today

is an important step towards that better future for children—this is about children.

There are currently about 9,000 crown wards, and these children in the care of a children's aid society—9,000 of them—come into the care of a children's aid society for a variety of reasons, but they all have one thing in common: We know that their best chance of success is with a safe, stable and permanent family to call their own. All the experts indicate, and so does the research, that children who are adopted or provided with the permanency of a long-term home have significantly better outcomes compared to those who remain in the care of a children's aid society. Adopted children are almost 25% more likely to complete high school and 50% more likely to continue school at the post-secondary level. Unfortunately, 75% of crown wards—these children that are under the care of the children's aid societies all across this province—have something called an access order, which legally prevents them from being eligible for adoption. It's a roadblock to their adoption, so that the adoption cannot proceed because of this order. In fact, access orders have prevented young people from being adopted in Ontario for more than 30 years. You can imagine all the children who could have been adopted and were unable to be because of this block that existed for all this time. At the same time, there are many prospective adoptive parents in our great province who long to bring a child into their lives to love and support. They cannot adopt these children because of these access orders.

1550

In 1984, the Child and Family Services Act was enacted in Ontario. This legislation forms the basis of our current adoption system. It seems that it is about time, according to all the stakeholders who have been consulted over the last year and a half, to fix the adoption system in Ontario. As a government, we must remove this roadblock and make it easier to bring these children and their prospective adoptive parents together.

These young people deserve and need a place they can call home. They deserve to be cared for and loved by parents and families who want to open their homes and hearts to them. These children deserve the best opportunity to succeed and reach their full potential.

Under the current legislation in this province, a children's aid society cannot place a crown ward—a child who is under the care of the children's aid society—for adoption where he or she has an outstanding access order that was made under the Child and Family Services Act. This section of the Child and Family Services Act would be repealed by this new legislation we have before us today. Under the new legislation, an access order will terminate automatically when a child is placed for adoption—so that barrier would be eliminated and the child would then be eligible for adoption, if this legislation passes.

The current legislation also states that access orders terminate at adoption placement, except those made under part III in respect of a crown ward. We propose to remove this exception so that all access orders, no matter

what type, are terminated when a child is placed for adoption.

The new legislation will also include a provision that the children's aid societies are not prevented from planning for the adoption of a crown ward, even where an access order is in effect. It seems that the children's aid society couldn't contemplate planning for adoption because there are these existing access orders.

These changes will make a big difference for thousands of children who want to be part of families and who want to come home from school to a hug or a high-five from Mom and Dad and their new adopted family.

In addition to our proposed legislative changes, we are implementing a number of suggestions from adoptive and prospective adoptive parents that will make it easier to adopt a child in Ontario. To match prospective adoptive parents with children who need a permanent home, we will double the number of Adoption Resource Exchange conferences held annually across the province, from two to four. These forums help match prospective adoptive families with children waiting to be adopted.

Adoptive and prospective adoptive parents have also told us that finding reliable information, no matter what adoption stream they're interested in—public, private or international—is a most difficult challenge. With that in mind, we will be providing easy-to-navigate Web-based information so that prospective adoptive parents can determine which adoption option is suitable and right for them.

We will also tackle the waiting lists for home studies and establish standard timelines for home studies in the public system.

We know from children's aid societies across this province that about 1,500 families are waiting for a home study to be completed. I guess this is a procedure that the children's aid societies conduct before a family is acceptable, but this long waiting list right now is certainly unacceptable. We will work with the children's aid societies to get this number down so that home studies are done without delay.

As I mentioned earlier, we also understand that there are better ways to care for aboriginal children and youth that keep them connected to their communities, culture and traditions. In fact, the Child and Family Services Act recognizes the distinct social and cultural needs of aboriginal and native people, and notes that, wherever possible, services under the act should be provided in a manner that recognizes their culture, heritage, traditions and the concept of the extended family. That is why, as part of the changes we propose, we will work with the children's aid societies and First Nations so aboriginal children and youth in care remain connected to their communities, cultures and traditions through more frequent use of customary care arrangements.

In customary care, an aboriginal child is cared for and supervised by a person who is not the child's parent, according to the customs and traditions of the child's band or native community.

While we aspire to secure permanent homes for every child in our care, the unfortunate reality is that some will

not be adopted or permanently placed. Some of these children will grow up in the care of children's aid societies. We will not give up on these kids, nor should we give up on them. They need our help to make their transition to adulthood easier.

We know that almost half of Canadians in their twenties live at home and enjoy all the support that comes with living at home. Yet right now, a youth who lives in the care of a children's aid society at the age of 16 or 17 is not allowed to come back for the support he or she needs and wants. When youth leave the care of a children's aid society before the age of 18, they face an abrupt end to the emotional and social supports they received in the care of children's aid societies. These youth are often not yet prepared to assume responsibility for their own needs and well-being. This makes them at risk of falling through the cracks and being unable to cope. This is not how good parents take care for their children.

As you know, children at a certain age sometimes want to leave and feel that they are mature adults. Then they realize once they leave home and they have to pay bills and find a place to rent, and nobody's cooking for them, taking care of them or giving them the love they deserve—these children will come back home. In the children's aid societies, if they leave they cannot come back.

New policy and our changes to the legislation, if passed, would allow youth whose court-ordered care for a customary care arrangement ended at the age of 16 or 17 to voluntarily return to their children's aid societies to receive financial and non-financial supports until the age of 21. This is another major part of this legislation. If that 16- or 17-year-old leaves and then realizes that they cannot cope by themselves in society and need help and nurturing, this legislation, if passed, will allow for these children who've changed their mind to come back under the umbrella and the support of the children's aid society until they are 21 years of age. I think this is a very important change, because we know that some of the decisions that 16- and 17-year-olds make may not be the right ones.

This continued support will help these young people achieve better educational outcomes and help them become successful adults. As these children are supported, obviously, all of society benefits from them making the proper adjustments in education and career choices.

1600

We will also make it easier for a youth receiving financial support from a CAS to go to college or university. We will do this by exempting the extended care and maintenance funding that these young people may receive from their children's aid societies from being considered as income if they apply for financial assistance from the Ontario student assistance program. This is another encumbrance that was there and that is being removed. Therefore, if they receive this financial assistance, it will not be considered as income that will be punitive for them when they're trying to get OSAP.

That's another very important thing, because we all know that a young person's ability to get proper training and education will ensure greater chances of success. This encumbrance is also removed in this legislation.

These are critically important steps for young people. We have seen many innovative approaches in this legislation. We know that the children's aid societies are doing great work, and these are some of the changes that they've asked for. We know that the expert panel has recommended these changes take place. The expert panel was headed by the now-Governor General David Johnston. All in all, this piece of legislation has something that many organizations and stakeholders want. They've been consulted for the last couple of years, including the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, the Adoption Council of Ontario, the Dave Thomas Foundation, the Laidlaw Foundation, and the Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare. All these experts say that it's time for these changes to be undertaken as soon as possible.

These children deserve a warm, loving, caring home. We need to get rid of these obstacles that make this very difficult with the present legislation. I hope all members of the House will engage in an examination of this legislation. I look forward to your input and comments, and hopefully we can make life better for these children, right now, who need a break. I hope that we can agree to do that for these young people in our province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Yes, Minister?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I seek unanimous consent for the House to revert to reports by committees for the purpose of receiving a report of the Select Committee on the proposed transaction of the TMX Group and the London Stock Exchange Group.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Is there consent? Agreed.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE PROPOSED TRANSACTION OF THE TMX GROUP AND THE LONDON STOCK EXCHANGE GROUP

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I beg leave to present the final report from the Select Committee on the proposed transaction of the TMX Group and the London Stock Exchange Group and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Does the Chair wish to make a brief statement?

Hon. Gerry Phillips: Yes, I do. On behalf of the Ontario Legislature's Select Committee on the proposed transaction of the TMX Group and the London Stock Exchange Group, I'm pleased to table its report today. The report includes a dissenting opinion from the New Democratic Party member of the committee, Mr. Gilles Bisson, the member from Timmins-James Bay.

The committee's report is a result of consultations held in March 2011 with members of the public and

interested organizations. During the public hearings, the committee heard a series of presentations by witnesses, including experts such as the TMX Group, the London Stock Exchange Group and the Ontario Securities Commission. The report makes nine recommendations that reflect the committee's views after considering the testimony heard from all the witnesses and the written submissions.

As noted in the report, the committee wishes to emphasize that it has no power to impose its view on the matter. It is the committee's hope that the recommendations will be taken into consideration by the proponents of this transaction before seeking the necessary approvals, and by regulatory bodies and governments as they proceed with their review and approval processes. The committee also wishes to emphasize that it took no position on whether or not the transaction should be approved by the regulatory bodies and Industry Canada. Rather, the committee sees its recommendations as an important step in obtaining a better understanding of the issues associated with a transaction that could have significant and long-term effects on the economy of the province.

The committee is of the opinion that any transaction between the TMX Group and a foreign stock exchange group must take into account specified principles. These include the impact on and net benefit to Canada, including Ontario, its economy and people; Toronto's financial services sector; and northern Ontario's mining industries.

The committee's recommendations cover five main issues that were raised during the hearings:

- the structure of the board of directors of the merged entity;

- the role of regulatory bodies;

- strategic decision-making;

- the impact on jobs in Ontario and Canada; and

- the impact on the mining sector.

The consultation process revealed an underlying concern that, under the terms of the proposed merger, the centre of gravity in regard to the decision-making ability of Ontario and Canada would move to London. This shift could result in decisions made that do not reflect the interests of Ontarians and Canadians as a whole.

To possibly address this concern, the committee is putting forth recommendations. Three such recommendations are:

- that the board of directors of the merged entity have an equal number of directors from Canada and from the United Kingdom/Italy;

- that safeguards be built into the proposal that ensure the development and introduction of new technologies, products and services be carried out in Canada and the United Kingdom, and benefit both countries; and

- that an irrevocable commitment be made that the operations, assets and key staff of the TMX Group and its businesses will continue to reside in Canada.

The committee is proud of the way the members from all three political parties worked together and were committed to ensuring the interests of all Ontarians and

Canadians were at the forefront of deliberations and are reflected in this report.

I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

BUILDING FAMILIES AND SUPPORTING YOUTH TO BE SUCCESSFUL ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 FAVORISANT LA FONDATION DE FAMILLES ET LA RÉUSSITE CHEZ LES JEUNES

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): We will now revert back to Bill 179. Questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure for me to provide a couple of comments on Bill 179. I can't wait for our critic the member for Dufferin-Caledon to have her time to speak on behalf of our caucus.

In reviewing the bill, I realized that there are two issues that the government is dealing with with this particular piece of legislation: access orders, and also crown wards—that would be relinquishing that and allowing them to come back before they were age 18. I think the member for Eglinton-Lawrence said it's 21, but the way I understand the legislation, it's 18.

From what I can see, however, the legislation is not going to stop grandparents, for example, from contacting us about some of the private members' bills that members have put forward on that side of the House. I think the member for Niagara Falls has had a private member's bill that I've received correspondence on from grandparents across Ontario.

As well, I don't know that this bill addresses some of the events that I attended last year. Last June, I attended a fundraiser, and I think they were selling hot dogs and baked goods, because there was some mention that the minister had implied that they wanted children's aid societies to have bake sales and sell hot dogs if they wanted to raise money for programs. I'm not particularly sure, from what I heard from that side of the House, that this bill is going to address that issue, but it is a question that I'll put on the floor, and perhaps I'll get an answer from one of the government speakers.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the government House leader and the member from Eglinton-Lawrence as they tried to explain what was contained within the body of the bill, and I must state that I'm disappointed. This is a very complex bill, and between the two of them, they only had a few brief comments to be made in that period of time.

Of course, there are two main functions of the bill, as has been outlined. One is to facilitate adoptions of crown wards, and the second is to allow crown wards to get back into the system between the ages of 16 and 18 so that they might be able to better receive support from children's aid societies and the government of Ontario.

What the government has not explained, and what I'm hoping that they will explain, and what I want to further discuss when it is my opportunity to speak is why all of those key recommendations from the expert panel that the government set up following the last election have not been followed. These are but two of many recommendations, and it takes me back to the position of the Pascal report on education. It's all well and good for the government to cherry-pick and take two out of 20 recommendations and then wonder why there is some angst in the community—just as they cherry-picked one out of 10 recommendations made by Charles Pascal when it came to education.

1610

It is probably not sufficient for the government to just stand up there and state the obvious; that is, that we want crown wards, where possible—the 9,000 of them or so who exist in Ontario today—to be adopted. Of course everybody agrees with that. But nowhere has the government so far explained how the legislation is going to be put in and what kind of funding arrangements are going to be made to facilitate this.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I did listen carefully to the government House leader and the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. I know that in the period of time that I have been in public life, I've had the opportunity to work with a number of executive directors of the Kawartha-Haliburton Children's Aid Society. I shared with my good friend the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock the individuals that I've had to work with—first Bob Penny and then Paul Hudson and currently Hugh Nicholson.

Hugh Nicholson just recently said that he will be retiring as executive director of Kawartha-Haliburton Children's Aid Society. He had a very long and distinguished career previously, being the executive director of the children's aid society that covered the North Bay area before he took the job in Peterborough. One of the great strengths that he brought with him when he arrived in Peterborough was the whole issue of adoptions within First Nations communities. He had extensive exposure in working with First Nations communities in and around the North Bay area, and the member from Eglinton–Lawrence did touch upon that in his remarks this afternoon.

One of the important aspects of this legislation, as it gets debated and ultimately goes to committee for review, is the whole issue of crown wards in the province of Ontario. Right now I'm told that there are about 9,000 crown wards in the province of Ontario, and shockingly, only about 10% are adopted each and every year. Currently, this substantial barrier is in place for these crown wards to find a family in which to be nurtured and grow and seek their future. So this piece of legislation is a wonderful start in this process.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments or questions?

Mr. John O'Toole: Bill 179 is the bill we're debating right now, and I'm just sort of trying to fill in for—the response from our critic was very clear on this.

The adoption issue is quite controversial. It involves families, families often in trouble and families that need the aid of children's aid, so I wouldn't ever be critical of that organization and the tough issues they're trying to deal with.

The most vulnerable people in society, you might say, are our youth. In my view, the bill, as described to us by our critic Ms. Jones—the first section there makes quite good sense. The section is the adoption issues around access, under access orders. I have orders here to stay on message. But the most important thing is to not lose focus on the child at the end of all of the discussion.

Next, the most important unit of society is the family itself, strengthening the family in this attempt here. Under that section of the previous bill, Bill 210, if there's an access order in place, and that includes, I think—outside today there are grandparents who are lobbying or at least wishing their voices to be heard. They should be recognized, in my view. As long as they are custodians with a responsible history of care and things like that, I think that should be certainly looked at. But I want to make sure that the repatriation within the family is given the most obvious opportunity if someone wants to adopt within the family. I think that should be supported, and I'm not sure—our position is quite clear, as our critic has said; it's to put the family first and make sure that the child's safety is paramount in all decisions.

This bill, I'm sure, will get our support. Our critic is leading that charge in that—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Eglinton–Lawrence has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Mike Colle: I thank the members for Leeds–Grenville, Beaches–East York, Peterborough and Durham for their comments.

Just a correction there: The legislation does say that a ward who is 16 or 17 can come back into the system, and then financial services will be given to them till they're 21. I hope the member from Leeds–Grenville made note of that correction. You can get support till you're 21.

In terms of the other issues, I think the co-chair of the working group said it best: “The minister's action today shows an impressive grasp of the issues facing prospective parents and kids in care. This package of legislative changes and other supports for prospective parents will result in better outcomes.”

There's a whole series of actions that this government has taken along with legislation. Some of the actions are not in the legislation because they don't need legislative change, but certainly they're reducing the waiting list. There's an 8% increase in what we gave children's aid societies last year. We're doubling the number of Adoption Resource Exchanges, making it easier for prospective parents to get information online and working with CASs and First Nations—so, aboriginal children. There's a real emphasis in this legislation on ensuring that there are supports given to First Nations children.

It is a piece of legislation that's roundly supported by all the major stakeholders on the expert panel, and many of their recommendations are in the legislation. Others are part of the ongoing efforts of our government in helping children. So it is a timely piece of legislation that the stakeholders want to get enacted as soon as possible because the delays are not to the benefit of the children.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I welcome the opportunity to join in the debate today on Bill 179, Building Families and Supporting Youth to be Successful. Like the member for Nipissing, I am also the proud aunt of a young lady who joined our family through adoption, so I have more than a passing interest in legislation when it talks about home studies and the adoption process. There are lots of opportunities for improvement. I think the Towards Sustainable Child Welfare in Ontario report that came out almost two years ago was an excellent report that we should be basing our debate and discussion on today.

At the onset, I will say I think there are quite a few positives in this bill, but I also believe we need to hold public hearings. We need to listen to what the families and the organizations are currently dealing with in the existing system and things that they believe could be changed and ways that we can make this bill better, because there are improvements and amendments that could be included and incorporated in Bill 179.

I also have some questions about this bill. I'm a little disappointed that the minister, during our leadoff debate, has opted not to participate. But having said—

Mr. Mike Colle: That's out of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): If you could just withdraw that, please.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I withdraw.

The legislation was brought in—

Mr. Mike Colle: On a point of order, Madam Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Excuse me. The record was already straightened out.

Mr. Mike Colle: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Go ahead.

Mr. Mike Colle: The minister is at a First Nations aboriginal child summit on this very subject, and it's demeaning for the—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. She withdrew. It's not a point of order, and it had already been recognized.

Continue.

1620

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I also have some questions about this bill.

Interjection.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Are we done? Only one of us has the floor, and I'm fairly clear that—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order.

The member for Dufferin-Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I still have the floor, Speaker. Thank you.

As I said, I have some questions about this bill, and I'm hoping that we can get them answered today. I'm starting to wonder, with the level of debate and decorum, whether that's going to happen.

Having said that, I would like to take a minute to thank Cathy Paul from the child welfare division of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. She gave an excellent briefing to me on Thursday, the day after the bill was introduced. She answered all my questions with no hesitation, and I do appreciate the time that she took to share that information with me.

One of the first things I want to talk about is the home study process for potential adoptive parents. As I said, I am an aunt of a family member who was adopted, and so I have some knowledge of how the current home study process works. It is my understanding that there is currently a wait-list of approximately 1,500 families to get a home study completed by the children's aid society. In fact, I believe that number is considerably higher, because there are many children's aid societies across Ontario who have chosen to tell potential adoptive parents, "Don't bother waiting for a home study from us. We have limited resources. We do not have the ability to complete your home study in a short amount of time, and therefore I would recommend to you that you go privately to get your home study completed." So that 1,500 number that has been bandied about: I believe that, in fact, it would be higher.

What I would like to know from the ministry is specifics on how they plan on dealing with these backlogs. Will more social workers be hired? As I understand it, temporary funding will be allocated to deal with the backlog but, again, in what format? If you have families who have simply chosen not to wait on a children's aid society wait-list, then your number is going to go up, so the 1,500 is going to be skewed. How long does the ministry estimate that it will take to clear the backlog? Will the backlog include both private and public home studies? It's my understanding that some children's aid societies have not even begun wait-lists for that very reason. There are a number of examples that I could give you of children's aid societies that are quite small, and for the very few children who do become available for adoption, they transfer them to another CAS because there aren't sufficient resources within their small agencies to do that.

It seems to me that this bill adds more and more responsibilities on to the backs of the children's aid societies, with no obligation or understanding of the funding that it takes to implement them. I am in no way questioning that we need to deal with the backlog; I am concerned that this is another level of responsibility legislatively being given to the children's aid societies across Ontario, with no equivalency in terms of funding or understanding of how they can implement.

I mentioned the Towards Sustainable Child Welfare in Ontario report. It's almost two years that we've been waiting for action on this report. We've already had a

number of members in the chamber talk about the valuable work that the sustainability commission raised; many, many recommendations—I believe there were upwards of 20, and this bill will cover just two. Since those two years have gone by and we've had the sustainability report tabled, we've had a number of children's aid societies that have actually had to file section 14 reviews of their funding model. For people who are unfamiliar with a section 14, it is essentially having the children's aid society ask the ministry to open up their books and saying, "Show me where we are able to financially provide the legislative mandates that you've asked us to do." They are not able to do it, and they are willing to go through a section 14 to prove that it's an unsustainable model of how much they've asked children's aid societies to do and yet no funding to tie it in.

We continue to download more responsibilities on to the children's aid societies, but we've been hearing very little on changes to their actual funding model. The closest that we've come to any kind of discussion on a funding model is actually recommendations for children's aid societies to amalgamate. I believe that the latest number is that 13 separate children's aid societies across Ontario have been asked to combine their services with another agency or combine with a second children's aid society. Kenora–Rainy River comes to mind immediately. They are in discussions right now, and a lot of that discussion is because they are simply unable to sustain the funding model that the current government has given them.

In the midst of all this, children's aid societies have been faced with laying off employees in order to meet their budget constraints. York region had their budget cut by \$7.3 million in 2009 and handed out layoff notices to 16 employees. In my own riding of Dufferin–Caledon, Dufferin Child and Family Services saw their budget cut by 17.1% halfway through the 2009 fiscal year. Peel estimated that they would need to cut 24 front-line workers to work within the new budget constraints. Halton would need to cut 34 workers, and Durham 63. They are all to work with their existing budgets but still provide essential child protection services and answer every call that comes in. London has seen the closure of six area group homes—these were group homes that were serving children with special needs, mental illness and addiction—all because the mandate and the funding did not match.

While I agree that we need to get moving and get more home studies completed, we need to find that balance between properly funding the children's aid societies and their legislated mandate. I know that the sustainability commission has been out travelling the province and meeting with children's aid societies to discuss funding and their mandate, and has recommended that some of the smaller children's aid societies consolidate either with each other or other agencies within the area. As I mentioned, 13 are in that process right now.

I want to move on now to the 30-day waiting period. There was a reference made that children who are currently in care could not be considered for adoption if they had an access order in place, and so the new legislation would actually allow children, even if they had an access order, to move forward through an adoption process. The children's aid society would have 30 days to contact the individual or individuals—because it's not always birth parents; it could be siblings, grandparents, neighbours. There's a whole range of people who could have access orders in place. So the 30-day waiting period would oblige children's aid societies to contact the individual who holds a current access order, notify them that the child is potentially up for adoption and give them 30 days to apply to the court to say, "I would like an open access order," which would allow the relationship to continue in a different model, and yet still allow the adoption to take place. So there's that 30-day waiting period to notify the holder of an access order that the order will be terminated and the child is going to be placed for adoption. Again, it's now up to the children's aid society to use all methods available to contact the holder of the access order, and it is up to the judge to determine that all reasonable effort has been made to contact the holder of the access order for it to be officially terminated.

So we have a situation where there is 30 days for it to happen, and then the judge decides whether what the children's aid society did—whether it was in the form of notification by letter, by face-to-face contact, phone—was sufficient to allow the access order to be officially terminated. Again, this places more burden on the shoulders of the children's aid societies, because the reality is, if the access order is not being utilized, it makes it very challenging for a children's aid society to potentially find the individual named in the access order and then get some action on the other side. It's an important part, but it is an added responsibility that we are putting on the CASs across Ontario.

1630

I want to now talk for a few minutes about Bill 210, which was the Child and Family Services Statute Law Amendment Act passed by the Liberal government in 2006. I'd like to read to you from a press release that went out regarding Bill 210 because it directly relates to what we're now discussing with this new legislation. I believe there's a little bit of catch-up and correction happening with the new legislation before us.

From the press release:

"Openness in adoption arrangements is the key to finding more permanent families for Ontario's crown wards....

"If passed, the legislation would make thousands of Ontario children eligible for adoption, taking them out of foster care and into permanent families." Again, this is from five years ago.

"There are about 9,000 crown wards in the care of Ontario's 52 children's aid societies"—that number is actually up from early in 2003, when there was approximately 7,900. "A crown ward whose birth parents

have a court-ordered right to visit or contact cannot be adopted unless they give up that right." That, again, is the access order I was referencing.

"Currently three-quarters of crown wards are ineligible for adoption because their parents still have access to them. Yet almost 60% of parents never take advantage of their rights, and don't contact their children." Consequently, the kids are moved from foster home to foster home with no option or availability for a potential adoptive situation. "As a result, only 10% of crown wards are adopted each year—about 900. (This compares with about 700 international adoptions each year to Ontario, according to Citizenship and Immigration Canada.)" So, in fact, there are almost an equal number of international adoptions as domestic adoptions.

"Under Bill 210, which"—did—"amend the Child and Family Services Act, crown wards could retain contact with their birth parents after being adopted." That's the open access. "They would no longer have to cut off all contact to be eligible for adoption.

"The Ontario legislation's stress on openness reflects the strong trend ... toward open relationships in adoption: birth and adoptive families know each other's names and addresses, and have ongoing contact through letters, phone calls or visits." What that option is, whether it is contact by visits, letters or phone calls, is actually all set out in the access order. "Open adoptions have been the norm in private domestic adoptions for many years." It was one of the barriers, quite frankly; parents who were potentially willing to give up their children for adoption would consider that a barrier. So by allowing the open access, it made more children open to having a family situation. "A similar rule in the public sphere should boost the number of public domestic adoptions." Again, these are the goals that were set out five years ago with Bill 210.

"Ontario's Bill 210, officially called the Child and Family Services Statute Law Amendment Act, would allow a children's aid society to go to court to get an openness order for crown wards who are to be adopted.

"Bill 210 provides that:

"—If a child who is a crown ward has been or may be placed for adoption, the court may grant an openness order before the adoption is finalized.

"—To make an openness order, the court must be satisfied it is in the best interests of the child, and will allow a continued relationship with a person that is beneficial and meaningful to the child, such as"—but not limited to—"a birth mother, foster parent or member of the child's extended family.

"—The adoptive parent and other parties can make their own openness agreement, before or after adoption. This would allow an ongoing relationship with significant people in the adopted child's life, such as birth or foster parents, or the adoptive parent of the child's sister or brother."

It ended with, "If the changes go through, a child could keep important ties to her birth family, siblings or grandparents, and still be adopted."

Another change that was implemented with Bill 210 was additional improvements to help remove barriers preventing thousands of Ontario children from being adopted. "Standardized application and screening process: The government is changing the application process to make it consistent for both public and private adoptions across Ontario, and to avoid repeated assessments of prospective parents." You can also actually include the home studies necessary for fostering.

"Guardianship: In a legal option beyond traditional adoption, children could gain a permanent home by being placed under the guardianship of an adult, if they don't want to be adopted or placed with a relative.

"The new funding formula will allow children's aid societies to pay for post-adoption support services such as physiotherapy and counselling."

Then we talk about some of the stakeholders who commented on Bill 210. "The Adoption Council of Ontario ... said it is pleased with the changes proposed to the adoption system. 'This is a very good day for adoption,' said Pat Fenton, ACO executive director, 'but it is essential that the government move quickly to implement these changes. Every child deserves a forever family, and every day that we wait to make these changes, thousands of children in Ontario have to wait longer for their family.

"The removal of access orders as a barrier to adoption placement is a key intent of the proposals,' she added, 'and it is a great step, as it gives the opportunity for openness arrangements to be considered where appropriate. For me, a key element is flexibility and different options for permanence, with adoption being one of several options (others being guardianship, kinship care, customary care, etc.). It also makes the system friendlier to applicants, more responsive and effective.'

"The Ontario adoption community, led by ACO, has long called for a legal change so that crown wards with access" orders "can nonetheless be adopted.

"ACO's position is that 'it makes no sense emotionally and economically to keep children as crown wards who could be adopted by loving families.' Keeping a child in foster care for one year costs about \$40,000; children suffer from having to move from one foster home to another about once every two years. Providing a permanent family through adoption would be a cost-saving measure in both fiscal and"—more importantly—"human terms."

All of those comments were from Bill 210. Sounds very, very similar to the bill we are debating today. I would like to know how Bill 179 is going to be different from Bill 210. Five years later, there is still the same number of crown wards waiting for adoption in Ontario. I'd like to know what this government is going to do to ensure that this bill works this time, because it obviously didn't work very well the first time it was passed, five years ago.

Bill 210, in 2006, was supposed to increase adoptions in Ontario, but as we see, the numbers have stood still. Why, if access orders were to be removed in 2006, are they still not being removed today?

There is something else I have to question in the timing of this bill. For the past 23 months, the government has been applauding the work of the Expert Panel on Infertility and Adoption, who tabled their report in June 2009, yet the report was sitting on a shelf until last week.

One quote I'll pull from the report: "There are kids in Ontario who have no permanent home, and that is 100% the result of how difficult the" current "system is." This was written after the 2006 legislation that was supposed to make adoptions across Ontario easier to manoeuvre through.

Another quote from the report: "Children's aid society adoption service providers told us they don't have the resources they need to do the job they would like to do.... The central systemic problem is that adoption is not the primary focus of children's aid societies, nor should it be. Child protection is, understandably, their main focus. Only about 2% of children's aid society funding is devoted to adoption, and children's aid society workers themselves told us that the resources dedicated to adoption vary greatly from one children's aid society to the next."

I'm going to reinforce: That's not me speaking as a critic. That is from the sustainability report. These are the experts that the Liberal government asked to go out into the field and talk to the experts. I would like to know if this issue is going to be dealt with through this legislation, or how they're going to fix the flawed model so that more children can be adopted into waiting families.

1640

I'd now like to move on and talk to you a bit about the expert panel on adoption and fertility. I have met with a member of this expert panel, who spoke to me about the tracking of access orders within the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. I know it's a major component of the report. This was a report commissioned by the Liberal government. It was handed to the then Minister of Children and Youth Services in June 2009. Twenty-three months have gone by since that report was tabled in this Legislature and we are just seeing the first movement on it now, so I have to question the timing.

If you want a comparison, in December, the Dean report, the workplace safety report, was tabled, and in March, just three months later, Bill 160 was tabled. So we go from tabling a report to preparing legislation and debating it in less than three months. Yet, in comparison, the sustainability report on fertility and adoption took 23 months. I was hoping that you tabled this bill last week because you believe in the work the expert panel has done, and not just because the plight of crown wards was highlighted in the media last fall.

I have also heard that one of the reasons these access orders are still not being removed is because there is a backlog in the court system. If it is the courts that are slowing down the process, I would hope that the minister spoke with her colleague the Attorney General about ways to streamline this process to ensure that these access orders are administered and terminated in Ontario. Because of this backlog, many crown wards in Ontario

are actually turning 18 and aging out of the system without an opportunity ever for a permanent family.

Again, if we go back to the legislation that was passed in 2006, access orders should be terminated when children become available for an adoption placement. I look forward to seeing how this legislation will be different from Bill 210 and provide better results for children and families as they try to move forward with adoption.

Moving forward to the issue of adoption subsidies—which was not at all raised in Bill 179, but was clearly referenced in a number of adoption recommendations from the sustainability report: It is not mentioned in the legislation. It is my understanding that, currently, individual children's aid societies have the ability to provide adoption subsidies to parents who are adopting a crown ward and that these subsidies are, in fact, at the discretion of the individual CAS. In other words, it is a case-by-case basis. Quite frankly, it most likely depends on what, if any, amount of funding is available at the children's aid societies, and as I referenced earlier in my remarks, many of them are facing funding crunches. So there isn't going to be a lot of opportunity for adoption subsidies, and there is no reference made to them in Bill 179. I heard the minister say in her press conference last Wednesday that she would like there to be some consistencies in these subsidies, but she did not mention how this would work and she made no reference to how they were going to resolve it.

She said that she also wants to consult with experts in the field. I am hoping that throughout the debate she will provide some clarification on how this will happen and when this will happen. This leads to more delay, and I'm hoping the minister can shed some light on her government's plan for adoption subsidies across Ontario. Are they looking at one dollar amount across the province? Will it vary based on the cost of living of different cities or communities or the individual child's needs? There was no reference made to it in either the press conference or the minister's response, and unfortunately, those are the only two opportunities we've had to hear her speak on it.

I know that the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies noted in their pre-budget consultation that resources for adoption subsidies will increase adoptions of children, which will remove them from the long-term care of children's aid. There are still a lot of unanswered questions and a cloud over how this will work.

These subsidies will be especially important for the families who are willing to adopt a special needs child. The cost of keeping a child in care is approximately \$32,000. Special needs children were not mentioned at all in this bill, and the minister has mentioned very little about this issue. Of children in care, 68% are diagnosed as special needs. It may include attention deficit disorder or hyperactivity disorder, or psychiatric, development or learning disabilities.

Of children in care, 93% have behavioural difficulties. This can include aggressive, assaultive or inappropriate sexual behaviour, substance abuse, or being frequently

AWOL—or “runners,” as the children’s aid workers would say. Twenty per cent are suspended from school; 17% are identified as high risk, meaning they are risks to themselves or others. We all understand that children who are crown wards face significant challenges. Only 42% graduate from high school by the age of 20.

We need to improve the system. We need to encourage families to come forward, and we need to ensure that a system is in place that won’t put up unnecessary barriers for families who want to grow their family through adoption. Because of the challenges that we’re facing, these children with special needs are the least likely to be adopted because of their social and medical needs. As you know, if a child with special needs is a crown ward, they have access to all of the programs and medical supports that they need. Once a child with special needs is adopted, the family assumes responsibility for providing these needs.

I’m going to read briefly from a letter I got—actually, it was very timely: about a week before this legislation came forward. It’s from a mother who has adopted three special needs children:

“Approximately 12 years ago, a worker from assistance for children with severe disabilities came to my home to teach me how to fill out their paperwork. I showed her my son’s adoption subsidy”—or permanency funding, as most people would know in the industry—“and she said that the PF didn’t matter, that the assistance for children with severe disabilities was for his special needs. I was left with a duplicate copy of the paperwork to use as a guide for the following years.

“I’ve been doing it this way for 12 years and three adoptions. There has never been a problem. This year, on the request of their annual review, someone handwrote on the form letter asking for copies of each of the children’s adoption subsidies. The form was not signed. I did as I was asked. I was later told by the children’s aid society that that was confidential and that it did not need to be shared, as permanent funding was not part of ACSD. I received a letter back from ACSD saying the children would be denied benefits starting April 1 of this year because they received adoption subsidies.

“I requested a review. Their next letter said that they had completed the review and the children would be denied benefits because they completed their review and the children would receive medical and dental coverage with a minimum \$25 total benefit.

“I have no work benefits. The children’s aid society asked me to write to a member within the CAS. Two different CASs have provided letters stating that the permanency funding does not cover the children’s special needs. They gave me the booklet about permanent funding printed by the same ministry, children and youth services, that governs the assistance for children with severe disabilities.” And she goes on and on.

Basically the gist of it is that one ministry is trying to help this family, because they know she has three children with special needs—not adopted children, but three children with special needs. And the other ministry is saying, “We’re going to cut your funding off because

those adopted children get 25 bucks, so you’re on your own.”

It is ridiculous to me that we have two provincial ministries fighting and making this family go through these kinds of hoops when—let’s not forget—she did the honourable thing by adopting and wanted to have children join in her family, and now we’re having two ministries fight over whether they should fund them or not.

So I would like to know if the minister and her ministry have a plan for these special needs children, to encourage the adoption of children with special needs, who are obviously at the highest need, based on the stats I referenced earlier, yet seem to have the lowest likelihood of being adopted.

1650

In regard to another component of the bill, allowing children between the ages of 16 and 18 less a day to return to care voluntarily is an excellent idea. I think we can all understand that children will sometimes leave the care of the children’s aid society on their own. Of course, most of us being parents or knowing young people—you think that once you turn 14, 15, you know everything and you can do it all yourself, so I understand that crown wards at that age would potentially leave children’s aid. With this new proposal made in Bill 179, if necessary and if the child voluntarily agrees, the child would be allowed to return under the care of the children’s aid society until they’re 18, and in special circumstances until they’re 21. So I’m pleased to see that. As I said, sometimes it works out, sometimes it doesn’t, and this simple change will allow that relationship with the children’s aid society to continue.

I think it’s a good idea that we’re giving these same children between 16 and 18 the opportunity to apply for and more easily receive assistance under the Ontario student assistance program, or OSAP. As I mentioned earlier, the graduation rate for children in care is 42%. Hopefully, now that children know that they will have the option to apply for OSAP without having their financial assistance from the children’s aid society counted as income, it will better their chances at getting a post-secondary education. Anything to support youth in care getting access to an education I know we can all support.

I was pleased to see that Irwin Elman, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, had the opportunity to present to the Standing Committee on Social Policy concerning Bill 140, the affordable housing bill. We, of course, voted on third reading of that today. The Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth noted in his deputation that children in care are overrepresented in the homeless population and overrepresented in the youth and adult justice system, so we need to make sure we have policies in place to ensure that children in care have the tools to succeed.

To quote Mr. Elman from his committee deputation: “The other thing that is not really debatable is that study after study says—as one youth told me, it’s not rocket science—that this is what can help: housing; education;

mental health support, if they need that; counselling; employment. They need the practical things. They need connection to that one person who will make a difference in their lives; connection to a family of their choice, of their own making; connection to a community.”

Mr. Elman’s amendments to this bill were put forward and voted in favour of by both the Progressive Conservative caucus and the NDP. However, in that committee, the Liberals voted them down, so I now somewhat question their commitment to providing access to services for children in care. After all, Irwin Elman is advising as an officer of the Legislative Assembly.

I look forward to hearing what my colleagues in all parties have to say about Bill 179. I look forward to it moving towards committee so that we can hear what the stakeholders have to say. I’m sure that they have some excellent suggestions. I’ve already heard some in the very brief time that we’ve had to review the bill since its introduction Wednesday afternoon. I’ve had some excellent discussions, both electronically and in person, with stakeholders, who are pleased to see some movement.

A number, I must say, talk about the many recommendations that were brought forward in *Towards Sustainable Child Welfare* in Ontario. The very first recommendation was that the government of Ontario should create a provincial adoption agency with a local service presence. We don’t see that in Bill 179.

There is, as I go through it:

“Develop a focused program to find families for older crown wards and crown wards with special needs.” Again, no mention of that in Bill 179.

“Provide adoptive families and birth families with support to negotiate openness and ongoing support to maintain openness.” Well done; that is in Bill 179—pleased to see it. It’s an important part, but it is one part.

There’s a couple more that I’d like to highlight:

“The government should develop clear policy that demonstrates support for relative adoption, including relatives adopting intercountry”—again, no reference made in Bill 179.

“Include conflict of laws provisions in the Child and Family and Services Act which recognize adoption consents and orders terminating parental rights made outside of Ontario.

“Address legislative gaps, including those related to guardianship and expenses, and develop policy to assist Ontarians temporarily living outside the province who wish to adopt.” Again, no reference made to it.

I could go on. There are four pages of very clear, very concise recommendations made by this committee led by now-Governor General David Johnston. I think they did excellent work and Bill 179 is a good first step, but I would hate to think that two of over 20 recommendations are all we’re going to do to improve adoptions in Ontario. We have a long way to go.

There was a line from another debate where a member said that none of us are going to go to heaven with the changes that we’ve made to improve adoption. It was actually in reference to mental health. I think we could

say the same for adoptions in Ontario. I think we can all take some responsibility and hopefully all be included in how we can improve Bill 179 going forward.

I don’t want to belabour the point, but I do hope that we get the opportunity for true input and that we start to open up our doors beyond this chamber and ensure that we do get the public consultation that is so important.

I know, from talking to family members and individuals who have had the joy of welcoming a child to their family through adoption, that there is no more special opportunity. I’d like to see that we actually make sure that that opportunity is available to more Ontario residents, because there are lots of people who would like to have the benefit of expanding their family through adoption.

With that, I will leave my debate for another time. Thank you for your interest.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I know this is not a point of order, but I just thought I’d take the opportunity. My son is here from downtown Torrance in beautiful Muskoka. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Mr. Jeff Leal: He’s a great guy.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Since we have interrupted the flow, I will just make an announcement that we should wish happy birthday to Wayne Butt.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much on this auspicious day, the birthday of Wayne Butt.

I’d like to comment on the member from Dufferin—Caledon and what she had to say today. I listened intently because she spoke with some degree of knowledge and some considerable degree of compassion for those children who find themselves under the care of the children’s aid society. She also made some very good points that I think the government ought to hear.

First was the plight of children’s aid societies across this entire province, how so many of them are facing financial constraints or seeking orders in which to combine, are having a problem making ends meet or are having up to April 1, the beginning of a new fiscal year, to lay off staff, or have the fear of laying off staff in order for them to carry out the mandate which this Legislature and this government has put upon them. We need to always bear in mind the difficult job that they have to do, and the member from Dufferin—Caledon spoke very well about that point.

She talked about the concept of guardianship. Although adoption is the focus here today, we need to start looking at the concept of guardianship because in some cultures it is not possible or permissible to adopt children. I’m speaking mostly about the Islamic culture, the concept of sharia law, where it was strictly forbidden to adopt the child of another human being, whether that person was alive or not alive. There’s some good reason for that, and we need to take that into account here in Ontario, as increasingly people are coming from other countries.

1700

She also talked about Bill 210, which I'll leave for later because my time has run out.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Mike Colle: Just in terms of what the member from Dufferin–Caledon said, I'm quite perplexed, because she talked about the 23 months of waiting and delays. Then I find that her House leader moved a motion yesterday to delay the debating of this bill. It says, "substituting therefor the words 'This bill be not now read a second time but be referred back to the government with instructions to conduct further consultations with client groups.'" She's saying, "Why is this taking so much time?" Then yesterday they asked for it to be basically blocked. I find it very difficult to understand.

I just want to say that last year this government increased the subsidies for adoption services for children's aid societies by 8%—an 8% increase, which is quite substantial. The number of adoptions increased 21% last year alone.

There are many things that are being done along with this legislation, which is going to basically try to remove barriers for these children, especially our crown wards, to be adopted. All the members of various groups have been consulted. They've gone across the province. Experts from all walks of life who are helping children have done their consultation. Almost all of them agree that these changes in this legislation are long overdue. They're from the adoption working group; Mary Ballantyne, the executive director of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, applauds "Minister Broten and the McGuinty government for this comprehensive and thoughtful announcement." The Adoption Council of Ontario said they're encouraged by this bill. Adam Diamond, a YouthCAN coordinator, says it's great that youth can come back home and get the support to finish their education.

So there are a lot of good things. I think she was fair—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I certainly rely on the member for Dufferin–Caledon for advice. We moved a motion yesterday to give us one more day to work on this. We talked about it in caucus today—I chair caucus. I hope the government members had a chance to look at this as well and I hope they stand up today and make some comments on these amendments to the Child and Family Services Act with respect to adoption. This is actually a very long and strange title—I won't get into that. It's actually about adoption.

It makes it easier for children to be adopted if they're crown wards by addressing this issue of access orders. Under the new legislation, when a child is placed for adoption, all access orders are terminated. I feel that's a good thing. Like I say, we've just had a chance to discuss this today. It was introduced fairly recently.

Secondly, the legislation allows any child aged 16 to 18 less a day who had previously been in care and if they

had left—it makes it easier for them to return to care and makes them eligible for the extended maintenance program up until age 21.

As the member for Dufferin–Caledon mentioned, it's similar to the child and family services amendment act of 2006, but unfortunately that legislation, even though it allowed the termination of access orders—five years has gone by and really nothing has happened. The number of crown wards in care remains the same today as it did in—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I was present in the chamber and listened very carefully to the comments made by the member for Dufferin–Caledon. She made a very competent contribution to this debate. She raised points that are legitimate ones, that are valid ones. The government members, rather than getting all heated and bothered about it, should be listening and understanding that that's why we have these debates: because it helps us get a handle on what the legislation can or, more importantly, what it sometimes can't do.

The issue here is large numbers of crown wards who aren't being adopted. The impediment, we're told, is the access order; we understand that. But I suggest to you that there's more here than just the impediment of an access order. I suggest to you that the trend is to want to adopt younger children rather than older children.

I'm suggesting as well that by the time a kid is a crown ward and is 13, 14, 15, that kid may have had a whole lot of damage done to him or her over the course of the years by virtue of being flipped back and forth from a parental home back into a children's aid society as a ward of children's aid, of being in a foster home, what have you. That creates special burdens for adoptive families.

As well, there's the whole issue of kids with special needs who need special families, I tell you, to adopt them. One of the remarkable things that is omitted here is any consideration or contemplation of the additional costs that an adoptive family takes on when, for instance, with love and great compassion, they take on the challenge, emotionally, physically and financially, of a child with special needs. Why isn't this government considering the huge cost of caring for a crown ward? Yet the failure of this government to support those families who, with extra love and extra attention, want that child.

The crux here is that we've only got 16, 17 days. I don't know what the heck the government had in their minds by introducing this at this point in the legislative year. Sixteen, 17 days—this bill needs committee work. For the life of me, I'm not sure that—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Dufferin–Caledon has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thank you to the members from Beaches–East York, Eglinton–Lawrence, Haldimand–Norfolk and Welland.

To compare asking for one further day to allow us to review the legislation, when we've waited for 23

months—it is incomprehensible to me that you can make a comparison and an argument that one day to allow us to talk to stakeholders, to allow us to reach out to families who have gone through an existing adoption process and get their feedback, is undue delay. Twenty-three months is the undue delay; that is the frustration.

I'll read from one email that I got this morning, that said: "We also believe that there are components missing from Minister Broten's bill and that this all should have been addressed when Raising Expectations came out nearly two years ago. We find this appalling." That is from an agency that looks after families, that advocates for families who want to adopt children. So please don't tell me that a one-day delay is unreasonable.

The Toronto Star article that talked about this bill when it came forward said that Bill 179 is simply tweaking the existing legislation and fails to address two major barriers to adoption. We've talked about them both: the challenges that the existing children's aid societies have already in dealing with the pressures that they have, and the challenges that families have who want to adopt a child with special needs, and the fact that there are no ongoing subsidies available to them, or consistent subsidies.

I will leave it at that and thank you for your time, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I'd like to preface my remarks by just talking about a little bit of my own experience in dealing with children's aid.

It was my privilege and my honour, when I was the mayor of East York and later, as a member of the megacity council of the new city of Toronto, to be council's representative on the Children's Aid Society of Toronto. First of all, as the mayor, I was representing Metropolitan Toronto, the council of Metropolitan Toronto, as it then was, and after amalgamation, the city of Toronto, as it then was, to go to the children's aid society each and every month to a round-table meeting of ordinary citizens, of some experts, of two politicians, of which I was one, to sit down and talk to those people who tried to put together the children's aid program for an entire large city like Toronto. It was a difficult job, not so much for me, because my job entailed one evening a month, but for the people who worked there. I am, to this day, eternally grateful for what they were able to accomplish in the most trying of circumstances.

There never seemed to be enough government money. There never seemed to be enough resources for the thousands upon thousands of children who needed them. The only thing that there was always plenty of was criticism—criticism from the press, criticism from families who were upset at what the children's aid society was trying to do, criticism from other levels of government; there seemed to always be a lot of that. The people who work for children's aid were amongst the finest individuals I ever had the opportunity to meet. I remember with great esteem Mr. Bruce Rivers, who was at that time the CEO of children's aid in Toronto and

who has since gone on to work for—I'm trying to think of the name, the group that deals with adults with intellectual disabilities here in Toronto.

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Mr. Mike Colle: Community Living.

Mr. Michael Prue: Community Living. Thank you very much. It wasn't coming to me.

He has since gone on to work with them. He instilled in me the complexity of all of this.

We had children, so many children, who were taken from their families. They were taken from their families for horrible reasons: some because the families were into drugs or alcohol; some because there was abuse and sexual abuse; some because the children were deprived and were not being given the necessities of life, often because the parents were incapable, sometimes unwilling, but mostly incapable of providing for them; and sometimes because the children were abandoned. In every case, there were people who were there to help: trained professional people who tried to find them homes, lawyers who sometimes had to make them into wards of the state, and foster parents who came to the ready to provide temporary homes while we tried to do some long-term planning.

The children who were placed as crown wards sometimes succeeded but all too often, unfortunately, did not. I do remember all of those success stories that we heard around the table, and I do remember that once or twice a year there would be a meeting where some of those successful crown wards would come forward, sometimes to tell us of their success in school, how they had been granted admission to a university; sometimes they would put on talent shows and show how they were able to learn how to play musical instruments or to do some acting or other things. You had to marvel at the tenacity of those young people and how they were able to overcome the deprivation of their families, how they were able to overcome being placed as crown wards.

But I want to tell you that just as often, and sadly, far more often, people who were crown wards were problem children. They were problem children because they never quite were able to accept in their lives that they had been taken from their families or that their families had rejected them and that they were placed into foster homes or sometimes into group homes, and they simply never made it. It was very sad. I stand here saying that adoption is just one of the many things that need to be done for those young children to make them into really responsible, caring and productive adults. Unless we give every single tool that is available, we are going to find out exactly what was said by the expert panel. The expert panel said it far better than I think I ever could, and I want to quote from them. The expert panel reported:

"Former crown wards who age out of the system are less likely to finish high school, more likely to become parents themselves at a young age, more likely to be users of the mental health system, more likely to require social assistance, more likely to rely on homeless shelters, to experience poverty as adults and more likely to be in conflict with the law. The long-term costs to society

when children do not have permanent homes are staggering. The human costs, in terms of personal suffering and unfulfilled potential, are heartbreaking.”

We have here today a government bill that takes a very small step. The expert panel made 20 major recommendations, all of which deserve to be implemented. We have two of those recommendations coming forward here in the body of this bill, two major ones. They’re coming forward in the body of the bill, and one has to ask: Is this a good thing?

Well, of course, it’s a good thing. It is a good thing if you will take some of those children who languish on waiting lists to be adopted, who can be adopted and who should be adopted, and it’s another good thing to take those children who are 16 or 17 years of age, who have broken away from the system, who want to come back in order to be helped.

No one is going to deny that this is a good thing, but I think it behooves all of us to look at this bill and to see what it accomplishes and what more it could accomplish if the bill is made better.

The number one thing that the panel recommended that I do not see here in the bill is that we must increase the level of people who are willing to adopt children who are crown wards of the province. At present, it’s my understanding—and I’ve seen two sets of statistics, but it doesn’t matter which one is correct: one that there are 7,000 children who are crown wards, and another that there are 9,000 children who are crown wards. It doesn’t matter which one of those is true. I hope it’s 7,000 and not 9,000 for the sake of the children. But there is nothing in the bill to increase the number of prospective adoptive parents. That has remained stagnant since 2006 and is currently, to my understanding, somewhere around 1,500. So there are approximately five or six times as many crown wards who potentially might be adopted as there are families out there willing to adopt them.

This bill does not relate to how to get more people interested in taking crown wards as potential adoptees, and I think that is a major failure of the bill to this point and something that might be addressed in committee work. We need to do everything within our power to convince people to do the best they can by way of these children.

My colleague Mr. Kormos said there is an increasing tendency for people to want to adopt younger and younger children and a reluctance to take on those who, as he termed it, may be damaged by the system, by being passed back and forth between families and foster situations, perhaps being crown wards, legal difficulties, courts and everything else.

But we have an obligation, if we are going to do this bill right, to look at each and every one of those children and how we can do right by them. Adoption will not work in every single case. I am stating this quite categorically from my own experience. I have met and do know of children who did not want to be adopted. They were 12 years old, 13 years old or 15 years old and simply did not want to be adopted. Some of them could hardly wait until their 16th birthday, when they could

escape from the entire system, even though the escape would be to the streets and homelessness, because that is how despairing they were.

One has to know that not all of these children will ever be adopted, but surely we can do better than having 1,500 prospective parents for a group of 7,000 to 9,000 children. Certainly the overwhelming majority, certainly those under the age of 10 or 12, should be candidates for adoption, and this bill should be making much more effort to find families to do so.

Another question which I think surely we would be better equipped to answer following the committee hearings: Are we balancing the rights of all the parties involved correctly? Are the rights of children, birth parents and adoptive parents all being looked at and looked at very carefully? I think this is something that’s difficult to say at the outset.

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In my consultations with people who came from the minister’s office, who came from the bureaucracy, and met in my office for half an hour, some very pointed questions were being asked, and I’m not sure that all of the responses were appropriate.

I understand that people have worked long and hard on this bill—at least, I assume they’ve worked long and hard. They’ve had nearly two years since the filing of the report and have come up with only two recommendations. I know that what has been said is difficult in terms of openness concepts and other things that have been put into the four walls of the bill, but I am not convinced that everything is being done to facilitate the children, who are my primary concern, and also the birth parents and the adoptive parents as well.

This is a very, very complex bill, although it’s a small bill in terms of what’s written down and the number of paragraphs and the number of pages. A very careful balancing act of competing rights and concerns must be struck. That is why I know, and all of us know, that this is going to have to go to committee.

I am somewhat puzzled too as to why this is coming before this House with only a few weeks left. We are going to be meeting for the balance of this week, and then we’re going to be off for a little while, and then we’re going to be back for a couple of weeks. Then we’re going to be off for another week, and maybe—but maybe—we might come back for that last week of May/beginning of June. There are but four or five weeks left in this parliamentary session, unless, of course, the government wants to extend it. If you do, please let us know. If the purpose of coming back is to pass this bill, I, for one, would hugely welcome it. But if this is an exercise in us debating this bill for the purpose of the government being able to say that they introduced it and the opposition shut it down and we ran out of time and everything else, then I think the government needs to be very candid. It is highly doubtful, if there are to be structured hearings, that those hearings can be accomplished within the next four parliamentary weeks, because there are so many people who need to be heard.

We need to hear from First Nations groups. I heard the parliamentary assistant today state that the minister is meeting with First Nations groups on this bill and on adoption procedure. I am thankful that she is, in fact, doing that. It is absolutely essential that this take place, because many of the difficulties and the crown wards and the children at risk belong to our First Nations communities, way out of all proportion to their numbers in the general population.

We need to know that we are being culturally sensitive to First Nations groups, that we are not taking their children away from them. We have had experience in Canada—horrible experience—of taking away the children of First Nations people and putting them into residential schools. We've had a horrible experience trying to take them away, to demean their culture, to have them forget their language, to forget their parents and their surroundings and all of the people with whom they have lived. We do not need to compound that by failing to consult with them in terms of what is happening in this bill, and so I am thankful that the minister is consulting with them.

I do not know how much consultation has taken place to date because I have been unable to find out in the day or two since this bill has been tabled, but that needs to happen, and there needs to be extensive consultation. Again, I need to find out, and I need to hear from them and I need to have some committee hearings—and perhaps the government House leader can inform us what the government's plan is on all of this—to make sure that we have hit this right, because in this Legislature I want to do absolutely nothing that is going to harm the cause, the culture and the vitality of First Nations communities in the bringing up of their children, and to make sure that every single child who is a crown ward is looked after in a culturally sensitive way.

I also want to say that we need committee hearings to find out why the rate of adoption of crown wards has hovered consistently around 10%. It does not seem to me that the system is working overly well. It does not appear to me that a system where only 10% of the crown wards are being considered is one that we should be proud of. We should be finding out why this is happening and we should be making amendments to the bill that will increase that amount exponentially.

The NDP is also very concerned that the excellent, comprehensive and forward-thinking work of the Expert Panel on Infertility and Adoption entitled *Raising Expectations* is largely excluded from the bill. We want to find out and hear from the experts, perhaps even people who served on that expert panel, what they had intended, and perhaps from government members and others why these very real provisions have been excluded from the bill. There were many, many good things that were said that are not here. I don't know why they're not here. They could easily have been here. The government had two years to prepare. The government had a battery of lawyers and others to draft a bill that could have included these very provisions, but it has chosen not to.

There is also the very significant problem, or potential problem, when it comes to the ability of CASs or others, to contact birth families and, if the contact is not made within 30 days, to have that relationship severed.

As well as serving on the CAS for many years, I also worked, as many of you will know, in the immigration department. We used to have appeal rights that flowed: People would be sent a notice and they had 30 days in which to appeal the refusal of a family member in a family-class application. It would be sent to the last known address. But sometimes, every once in a while, there was a reason that people were not contacted, and I would think the reason could be very simple here too. You contact a parent who is estranged from the primary caregiver and you ask them if there is anything that they want to do, but sometimes that parent may be working in a foreign jurisdiction. Sometimes they may have gone to the United States or Qatar or some other place in order to find employment, and they are not within the jurisdiction of Ontario and may not have any idea what is happening. They may not find out until the 30 days have long elapsed.

There is no provision in the bill that I can see that will allow for an appeal of this. So you might get an otherwise good parent who does not have the authority over their son or daughter that has been granted to another parent and who would suddenly find that their relationship has been severed, that there is no provision for openness, that the adoption has taken place in their absence and they have lost their son or daughter.

I want to know what provision, if any, this government is going to make to allow for problems like this that happen. It is one thing to say that you can't find somebody if they don't want to be found, if they have absquatulated off the face of the earth—

Mr. Ted McMeekin: What?

Mr. Michael Prue: It's a good word. It is. It means to make off like a thief in the night—"absquatulated"—and no one can find them. It's quite another thing for a person to be away or unknown to a CAS worker—away on vacation, away on business, away attending a family funeral or something in another country that has taken them out of the jurisdiction for more than 30 days—and to lose their rights. I think we need to have something in the legislation that allows for that provision. To simply state that at the end of 30 days somebody throws up their hands and says, "I can't find the natural father. I can't find the natural mother. I can't find these people. I don't know where they are. Therefore, the adoption will proceed," only to have them come back, is tantamount to creating a lot of disturbance.

We have—and I've already talked about that—the whole problem of aboriginal communities.

We have to look at the impact this is going to have on children. As I've stated already, there are people who are not going to want to be adopted, who are 12 or 13 or 15 years of age and who will be listened to. But you will also have some very strong-willed children who will be younger, who will know their parents, who will cry, who will be disappointed and who will not want to be

adopted. We have to look at the impact on them. We have to look at what is in their best interests.

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I know it's often difficult to determine whether a child should have that right, but if anyone should have rights in these circumstances, I would leave it to the children. It is the children who will suffer. It is the children who, in and of themselves, have this great emotional turmoil and this great emotional bond with their birth parents and/or the people who bring them up. Sometimes it could even be a foster parent. To take them out of that parental situation and to give them up to someone else can be very traumatic.

I do know this: My sister-in-law for many years was a foster parent. She adopted one of those foster children to become her son, but she looked after so many of them. I know when those children, who were sometimes in her care for years, were given up for adoption or went somewhere else, the emotional pulling away was very, very traumatic for all of them.

We need to look after those children. We need to make sure that their interests go first.

We need to have, as I said, extensive community hearings. I haven't heard yet from the government whether these are planned, and if they are planned, how this bill is going to proceed within the time frame of this legislative session when it's due to be finished and elections take place in October.

In the last provincial election, the McGuinty government promised to strike an expert panel on adoption and fertility. Two years later, that panel gave an extensive, well-researched report with dozens and dozens of recommendations. Now, 20 months later, the government finally brought forward the issue to legislation, and as I've said, much of what the expert panel seems to have said did not make its way into Bill 179. The issue of fertility treatments is nowhere to be found. There's not a single mention in the bill. And the complex, multi-layered recommendations for adoptions in Ontario are nowhere to be found.

Bill 179 is being moved through this Legislature at a very fast progression. Notwithstanding the very capable and learned actions of my friends in the official opposition to delay the bill by one day so that they could consult with people, everything else has been done here with some very considerable speed. I don't know why the government is trying to move so quickly on this bill, other than to say that they attempted to fulfill the recommendations that were made by the expert panel. However, we are dealing with legislation that governs the lives of children and the lives of adoptive parents and the lives of birth parents, and I think we need to do it right.

The expert panel said the following: "The central problem is the current 'patchwork quilt' nature of adoption services in Ontario. Services are not structured in a way that makes sense for children or families—or even service providers. In fact, there is really no 'system' at all. Service providers tend to operate in relative isolation, often with few connections between them. Adoption policies, legislation, guidelines and standards are not

based on current research or best practices, are inconsistent across services and, in many cases, do not reflect the current realities of adoption—or the diversity of this province. Furthermore, insufficient information is collected about services and outcomes for children and families. Without evidence-based research, it is difficult to plan a comprehensive range of adoption services that anticipate and fully respond to children's, families' and service providers' needs." The members will find that on page 36 of the report.

The expert panel thus went on to recommend the creation of a provincial adoption agency. This is central and key to what they wrote, but is not found in this bill. They wrote that the creation of a provincial adoption agency was mandatory, and they urged the government to create a new, centralized provincial adoption agency with a local service presence in order to accomplish most of what needs to be accomplished—six major things.

The first is to "provide all interested families with the information they need to explore their potential to adopt." I do not see this within the body of the bill, and I do not even see it in terms of the adoption of crown wards. Perhaps the government members will tell me how this is contained within this bill, because unless you can provide the interested families with the information that they need, you will never be able to expand that list from its current 1,500 to meet the needs of all of those children who might potentially be adopted.

The second thing they said is that we have to "work with CASs to make appropriate and timely adoption plans for children in care." Again, I have not seen that within the body of the bill. If it's there, someone please advise us, because it is not readily apparent to me, either in my reading of the bill or in my discussions with officials who came to my office yesterday.

The next thing they said had to be done was that we have to "focus on finding families for older crown wards and crown wards with special needs." Again, there is nothing contained within the body of the bill that will facilitate this. We know, and I'm going to talk about this a little more in a few minutes, that one of the ways you facilitate the adoption of older crown wards and crown wards with special needs is that you make certain funds available to those very brave families who want to adopt them. It is one thing to take a child who is a crown ward, who has services provided for them by the government at no cost to the foster family, and another thing, if that foster family decides to adopt the child, to say, "Okay, we paid for all these things in the past. Now it's up to you," because so many people, even though they have love in their hearts and care for the child and want to do the best, do not have the resources to make that a reality.

I think about people who have taken children who have finally settled down in a foster situation after years of neglect or abuse, who have finally gone to a hockey team or have started to learn some things in school or who belong to music practice, or have special needs that are being met as a crown ward, and then, say, all these things that they've suddenly become used to and that have brought stability to their life are no longer available

unless the family has the wherewithal to pay for them. Surely it would make more sense, surely it would be a better thing, that the government put something in this legislation that would allow the funding, at least on a temporary basis or for several years, to allow people who were adopting older children or those with special needs to have the money and the wherewithal to accomplish it, to ease the transition from one to another, rather than yanking the children out of situations that they were finally growing comfortable with and which were meeting their needs to go to a family that could no longer do so. That's what we're hoping will be talked about when this goes to committee.

The committee recommended that we "match and place crown wards with families." Again, there's nothing in this bill that will do that. It is important to find the right match. It is important to find a crown ward who feels comfortable with the family, and a family that feels comfortable with the crown ward, because if you don't do that, then this whole thing will be doomed to failure.

They recommended that we "provide birth families and adoptive families with the support to negotiate and maintain openness when in the best interests of the child." This is not in the legislation either. In fact, the legislation goes so far as to say that if you don't file within 30 days, or if you can't find the birth parents, then the time is closed. I don't think that's in the best interests of the child, who forever will wonder why their parents have given up on them or will forever wonder why their parents cannot come around anymore. That would be a traumatic and horrible experience which would, in some cases, start the downward spiral.

1740

The committee also recommended that we "support families throughout the public adoption process and help families after the adoption is finalized." This is on page 44. This would involve a commitment of this and future governments to give some money to ease that transition. It would be far cheaper, I would put to all of you, to give the money or a portion of the money that is being spent through the CAS, through the crown ward, through the foster system, to the new family to make the transition possible and to make the child secure and happy than to continue the situation the way it is.

If the money is going to be spent anyway, I think it's far better to spend it within the confines of the family so that the child can truly be helped in a loving and nurturing way than to give it to a government agency, as well-meaning and as competent as the CAS is. In my view, the family would be the appropriate institution to receive the money, but there is nothing within the body of the bill or any commitment made by this government to spend the money in a way other than you're spending it now.

There are, and there will continue to be, serious problems in terms of finding enough families to be adoptive parents. As I've already said, there's 7,000 people and only 1,500 families. The report went on to state, and I quote again from it—and this is a long quote, Madam Speaker:

"And we repeatedly heard from families pursuing public adoption that, instead of being treated as a valued resource for waiting children, agencies worked to screen them out of—rather than into—the adoption process. Many families told us that they were not welcomed nor provided with the opportunity to explore whether or not public adoption was the right choice for them. This approach could be due to a lack of resources within CASs to embrace all prospective adoptive families and it could also be because many families initially inquire about adopting healthy infants. Some CASs told us that, at first contact with prospective adoptive families, they try to describe the realities of the needs of many of the children in their care.

"This may well have the unintended result of 'scaring off' families calling about healthy infants but who, with more complete information, might be more than willing to adopt a toddler, an older child or a child with special needs. The 'screening out' approach might be a natural outcome of a child protection orientation: approaching adoption using a child protection lens is completely understandable given how much child protection work CASs are engaged in on a daily basis."

That's found on page 46 of the expert panel report. But again, none of this found its way into this bill—none of it.

The expert panel went on to state again: "Despite this trend" of openness in adoption "we learned that openness and how it may be implemented is not yet widely understood by some adoption workers and many adoptive families. We have heard that many CASs find the current tools, including openness orders and agreements, to be very complex—so complex, in fact, that some have established a policy not to use them." This is my aside: Perhaps that's why nothing has really changed since 2006.

They go on: "The complicated tools, coupled with concern about safety for children and fears about how openness may infringe on the 'right to parent,' make some CASs and adoptive families reluctant to consider openness in public adoptions."

Children's aid societies are already struggling to stay afloat. My colleague from Dufferin-Caledon spoke about many of those societies, spoke about the financial insecurity that many of them have had in the past year as their funds dwindled at the time of the end-of-year allocation, so that they had to seriously look at laying people off. They are expected to do an enormous job in increasing complexity. They are given additional responsibilities by the government without the funds to go along with them.

Children's aid societies are struggling today to stay afloat, and only 2% of their resources are being spent on adoptions. If this bill goes through and they are going to have to start looking into more and more adoptions, if they are going to have to start increasing the number of adoptions or potential adopters from 1,500 to 3,000 or 4,000 or 5,000, then where are they going to get the funds? How are they going to accomplish this goal?

If it is the intent of the government—and it would be a laudable attempt—and if they were successful in getting children adopted, maybe they wouldn't need as much money. Maybe the money could be given to the families. Maybe that's what needs to happen here, but I didn't hear it from either the parliamentary assistant or the government House leader when they spoke. That's why we need this to go to committee; this is why we need to have this discussion.

Is this bill going to help or is it going to hinder? Is it going to make it more difficult for CASs to find adoptive places for people? Are they going to have the resources? And then, if it happens, where are those resources going to end up? If the CAS doesn't need them, I think it would be very laudable that the family get them. If the CAS continues to need them, are there additional funds for what can only be said to be one of the most worthwhile goals that we could undertake? That's a legitimate question to be asked.

With the new provisions in Bill 179 that will require a new process for terminating access orders and creating openness orders, what does this mean for CAS resources? I do know that a good deal of the money that was spent by the Children's Aid Society of Toronto when I was a member of it for some eight years back in the 1990s, up until I came to this place in 2003, much—far too much—of the money that they had was spent on legal advice. I understand that this is a complex process, that lawyers were constantly involved, that the courts were a remedy that had to be resourced all of the time; that people were running back and forth, the families who were potential adoptees sometimes, the birth families for sure, the official guardian for the children and the children's aid society itself. This was a hugely complex and expensive proposition.

We need to know, if this bill is going to require new processes for terminating access and creating openness orders, what, if anything, is going to be resourced to children's aid societies to do it. It could be that they need less money. I don't know, but I do need to hear about this, and we have not yet heard about this from anyone.

A very real issue that I want to spend some time on here is the whole issue of subsidy. I've touched on it a couple of times, but this is what the expert panel had to say about this, and it's important to read it all. It's from page 55 of the report:

“A second issue related to placement success in many public adoptions concerns adoption subsidies. As the child welfare system is currently structured, most children with special needs receive substantial additional financial support to address those needs while they are in care. This support may be cut off, however, if the child is adopted. We heard from some very dedicated foster parents who said they would like to adopt children currently living in their homes, but primarily due to the significant needs of the children, simply could not afford to do so. Others worried that adoption was not in the best interests of a child if it resulted in a loss of critical services and supports. Perversely, as the system is currently structured, a child with special needs has a

better chance of having those needs met by remaining in care—a ‘solution’ that overlooks their basic human need for permanency and emotional attachment, and the province's own need for fiscal responsibility. Simply put, it costs more to keep children with special needs in care than it does to provide adoption subsidies for these children.”

That's what we want to hear. That's what we want this government to say.

1750

The budget was passed a couple of weeks ago but there was nothing in the budget—I guess because the bill is not yet law—that would state how the government intends to move in this very vital sector. But within a billion-dollar budget I'm sure that there's monies that are not accounted for, or at least for which I cannot account, that the government could draw on if that is their intent. I hope it's their intent, and if it is, I'd like to hear that when it comes to committee.

The issue of subsidies was one of the very primary concerns raised by adoption advocates, nearly all of them who came before the special committee. We have a perverse incentive in the system, as they said, that if you are a foster parent, you have access to funding that will ensure the child in care has access to the services they need. But once you decide to do a wonderful thing, to bring that child into your family, to forever say that they are yours, that you love them and they are part of your family, then you lose that access. Does this make sense? It is an impossible situation for most people. We want to know what's happening with this before we give our seal of approval. It could that be the government has got this all planned out. I hope they do.

There is no moral justification though, I would say, for it and it makes terrible financial sense. The minister has hinted at a discussion with children's aid societies that this issue of subsidies will be discussed, but we don't know. We want to know and I think the children's aid societies need to know, and the people of Ontario will demand that right. They are the wards, they are our children; they are not anyone else's children. When they are wards of the state, they are our children and we have a responsibility to do what is best for them.

We know what this government has done in other similar circumstances, which does not bode well. My colleague the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, who's occasionally quite loud in this chamber, was never more diligent when he worked tirelessly to protect the temporary care assistance that grandparents were supposed to receive when they looked after their children so that the children did not become wards of the state. I remember all of those grandparents coming here. I remember the demonstrations in front of this building. I remember them coming into the Legislature and sitting in the public galleries. I remember the dismay that they had because the few tiny dollars that they were being given to look after their own grandchildren were being taken away by the system, and the system was indeed perverse.

For three years, my colleague Mr. Miller has been working with the grandparents to fix the definition of

“temporary.” “Temporary,” the government has determined in its wisdom, means for a very small period of time. The courts and the tribunals have determined it to mean something else. In fact, the two cases that have made it through all of the courts and tribunal system have found against the government. The two cases have said that “temporary” is not just for a short period of time, but “temporary” can be defined as until such time as the children might be normally expected to return to their own parents or perhaps to become wards of the state.

These grandparents are subsisting on very little and they were getting, I think, in one case, \$241 a month in order to look after all of the needs of a child whom they had assumed; for all intents and purposes, they were the guardian and looking after them. The government fought them every single step of the way. Rather than say this is a good thing so that they didn’t become wards of the state, rather than say it’s a good thing so they didn’t go into the care of the children’s aid society or end up in a group home, they denied the grandparents who were willing to look after them, grandparents of very modest and meagre means, the \$241 that allowed them to do so. That caused me then and causes me today considerable angst and I wonder, if the government is willing to do that to grandparents, what plans do you have for the system in terms of financing, what kinds of regulations will be made, and will the word “temporary” be bandied about some more?

The government denied there was even a problem. I remember the Minister of Community and Social Services being thankful that there was an appeal process. Big deal. That means the appeal process that took the families a year or two years, finding lawyers to do it pro bono because they had no money at all, and then in the end losing the case. Simply stating that everybody has to go through this elongated legal process to get some funds to look after their grandchildren causes me nothing but pain.

I want to also deal, in the time remaining, with Mr. Elman, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. Again, my colleague from Dufferin–Caledon spoke about his representations. He was the one who first alerted me to the use of “our” children. I think it’s an important concept, because the children who are wards of the state are, in fact, our children. We have taken them, and it is our responsibility to do that which is right. He made a presentation that called for the government to apply a lens to all decisions impacting crown wards of how our children are to be treated. Elman recommended making the financial support these youth receive through extended care maintenance not count towards income when it comes to subsidized housing.

There was a meeting just last week, I believe, in which a motion was put forward. After Mr. Elman spoke, after he made that recommendation, my colleague Ms. DiNovo from Parkdale–High Park put forward the motion in committee that would do precisely that: that the financial support these youth receive through extended care maintenance not count towards income when it comes to subsidized housing, so that they could

receive subsidized housing and look after themselves once they were no longer wards of the state, once they had maxed out at 18 years of age, to give them a chance. These are children who have been through destitution, who have been through poverty, who have been through neglect, who have been through, sometimes, abuse and sexual abuse. Some of them have lived on the street. Mr. Elman made a very simple request. The motion was put forward, and every single government member voted it down—every single one. I don’t know why, but it causes me nothing but grief in terms of this bill.

What is the plan of this government? What are they doing? They say they want to help those who are 16 or 17 get back into the system, and I believe they probably do. It’s only normal and natural that a child who has gone through some of these troubles in their life will find that they rebel, they run away, they don’t want to be part of it. It’s only normal or natural that, after a few weeks or days or months on the streets, a few times living in shelters, living in some friend’s basement on a couch, they find out that they’re not going to make it, and they come back and want to work with the system.

I agree wholeheartedly with this provision of the bill that allows children’s aid to say, “Yes, come back and we’ll help you. You’re not yet 18 years of age. If you come back and do our bidding, then we will, in fact, support you up until the time you’re 21.” I want these children to have an opportunity. I want them to get an education. I want them to have a job. I want them to have all of that. But it is also, at the same time, very, very difficult with the conditions that in are the body of this bill, because if children’s aid puts conditions that the child may not or cannot live up to, they will find themselves on the outside looking in.

I am mindful of the time. I have a few more minutes, but if it is time, I can finish on another day, Madam Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

I wish to inform the House that the late show standing in the name of the member for Durham has been withdrawn.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Wellington–Halton Hills has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of the Environment. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

1800

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

WIND TURBINES

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Wellington–Halton Hills, you have five minutes in which to give your question.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Here we go again, discussing the Minister of the Environment's contradictory statements on wind farm approvals. The last time I felt it was necessary to trigger a late show on this subject, which we had on October 5, the minister sent his parliamentary assistant, the member for Oak Ridges–Markham, to defend his own remarks. While her comments were intended to explain the approvals process, they did not in any way explain the minister's contradictory public statements—but that's hardly surprising. He gave her a near-impossible task: to defend the confusing and rapidly shifting words of her minister.

It's highly unfortunate that this debate is even necessary. Little has changed since last October, when I called the minister to account for his own contradictory statements regarding the municipal consultation process on industrial wind farms. At that time, I asked only that he repeat what he'd told his constituents at a meeting in Mapleton township. He failed to do so, necessitating a late show debate. And here we are yet again, at another late show debate on the same issue, because the same minister continues to duck responsibility for his own remarks.

I want to remind the House of our last late show debate, in a brief summary. Two community newspapers reported the remarks of the Minister of the Environment before he became the minister, when he was still the Minister of Revenue. In both the *Wellington Advertiser* and the *Drayton Community News*, in their May 21, 2010, editions, the minister appeared to promise his constituents that if municipalities refused to sign off on the wind farm applications, the Ministry of the Environment would not approve those applications. I'll read from the article verbatim:

"One resident in the gallery asked point-blank if there is anything the township could do to stop wind farms if the proponents have otherwise met all the government's criteria.

"Wilkinson replied companies must obtain the signature of the township for the application to be complete.

"If the application is not complete, the" application "will not proceed," he said."

Again, let's imagine the minister taking questions at that meeting, at which the atmosphere was no doubt very heated. It was, of course, his Liberal government that imposed the Green Energy Act, and no doubt he supported it.

One of the minister's own constituents recently wrote the following to the minister, copying me: "Since I was present at that particular council meeting, I can say that you indeed said that an REA must be signed by the municipality in order to be deemed complete. You gave us the impression that the municipality had the right not to sign if they felt the company had failed to address concerns by the municipality."

And so we have the minister, under fire, attempting to shift the blame for the wind farms to the local municipal government, implying that they could somehow veto the project application by denying a signature. Of course, we now know that's utter nonsense. The McGuinty gov-

ernment stripped municipalities of their power to stop wind farms, and it's time the minister finally admitted it.

In October, the minister failed to categorically repeat his earlier assurances. Instead, he told this House that a wind farm proponent "must submit a complete application, and that includes a review and a consultation with the municipality...."

I go back to the minister's constituent who wrote to him recently: "Stating in the paper that a municipality merely has to be consulted is not what you said. Please explain why you felt the need to alter your statement." He still hasn't provided that explanation.

Now, incredibly, he's changed his story once again. First, the minister suggested municipalities have an effective veto over new wind farm proposals. Then he suggested that the wind farm proponent need only submit proof of their consultations, in the form of a complete application. Now, incredibly, he suggests that the application need not be complete after all.

Here's a fact: The *Wellington Advertiser* reported on March 25 that the county of Wellington and the township of Mapleton have refused to submit the municipal consultation form on a wind farm proposal in Mapleton township.

The minister used to say that a complete application requires the municipal consultation form. But now we know he accepted the NextEra wind farm application, even without the required form, nine days before the county of Wellington took its stand.

This clarifies something important. For months, municipal officials have been trying to understand the minister's contradictory remarks, trying to understand exactly what he meant by "consultation," but this latest development makes one thing clear: The minister's consultation isn't even worth the paper it's written on. That paper, in this case, doesn't even exist.

We now know, notwithstanding the minister's empty promises of consultation and complete applications, that this government is determined to foist industrial wind farms on places where the elected municipal governments don't want them. On numerous occasions, this minister has failed to clarify his own remarks to his own constituents. For failing to correct his own record, for failing to uphold even the most basic standards of truth, he owes his constituents an apology.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The minister has up to five minutes in which to respond.

Hon. John Wilkinson: It's a pleasure to rise today and expand on the values behind the Green Energy Act. Mainly, these are the right to clean air, respect for our municipal partners, and transforming our economy with good-paying green jobs.

But first I want to touch on what I would call the evolution of the MPP for Wellington–Halton Hills. There was a time when you were on this side of the House and you supported protecting the environment.

In 1997, you said in this House, "Protecting the integrity of our natural environment so that future generations have clean water, clean air and a safe environment requires commitment, political will and action."

Obviously, you knew that green energy was the right thing to do, because in 2002 you said in this House, "We are aiming for green energy.... It will benefit all Ontarians."

But my friend's commitment to the environment and green energy has subsided. When recently debating green energy policy, he said in this House, "Who in their right mind would promise to shut down a fifth of Ontario's generating capacity?"

I'll tell you who: The McGuinty government made the promise of cleaner air to all kids and families who are suffering from dirty air, and we are fulfilling the promise we made despite your objections.

Is the \$3 billion in annual health care costs or the great number of people in this province who suffer or die due to poor air quality affordable?

I'll tell you where I stand. I'm with the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, the chief medical officer of health, the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, the Ontario Medical Association, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, the Asthma Society and the Lung Association.

On this side of House, we value our municipal partners. When you were in government, I say to the member, you wiped 50% of them, including my hometown, right off the map of Ontario through forced amalgamations, completely getting rid of them with the stroke of a pen. In contrast, we have uploaded literally billions of dollars in costs that your party forced on them and that never should have been placed on the property taxpayer in the first place.

Municipal consultation is an essential part of the renewable energy approval process. We want to hear from municipalities. Our act actually says that, by law, companies must provide municipalities an opportunity to have their say. I encourage all municipalities to fill out a municipal consultation form because we will make the company address any reasonable comments or the project will not go forward. But they are not limited to that form. We will take their comments in any form they choose to provide them. That's why I want to put on the record that I am so very pleased that Warden White in the county of Wellington wrote to me. Their feedback is now included in the submission that will be thoroughly reviewed and decided upon. I want to be clear: Not signing the form is not a veto, but we will say no unless the municipalities have had an opportunity to have their say.

I want to say in these last few minutes that it's best to touch on the third value: creating new jobs and supporting our farmers. The Green Energy Act is good for our environment and our economy. Just ask the more than 20,000 Ontarians who support green energy and signed up for the microFIT program. Many of those people are local farmers, small businesses and families in my riding and in the riding of the member opposite.

That's who I'm standing up for today. They work hard every day to underpin our rural economy. That's why I'm proud to be part of a government that is supporting them.

We already know that your leader wants to rip up those contracts. Kris Barnier, a staffer in his office, said,

"We need to be perfectly clear ... a PC government will shut down all of the planned expansion of the ... microFIT plan. There will be no new contracts."

I say that I believe that your plan will hurt farmers, it will hurt local business owners and it will hurt parents wanting cleaner air for their kids.

You have repeatedly accused me of being contradictory, so let me be clear. I believe that your position has evolved over the last few years. I remember when you were with Mr. Harris and you thought the environment was worth protecting. No wonder he didn't put you in the cabinet. I remember when you were with Mr. Eves: Then you said that you thought that we should have green energy. What happened there? The lights went out. So obviously Mr. Eves wasn't listening to you. He would have valued, as would have Mr. Harris, your wise counsel.

1810

But now we have Mr. Hudak in the House, and what does he do? He supports the member from Haldimand-Norfolk, who's all for dirty coal.

On this side of the House, clean air trumps all. That's why we're moving ahead with green energy. We'll do that in consultation with our municipal partners, as we always have.

SCHOOL ACCOMMODATION

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Nepean-Carleton has given notice of dissatisfaction with an answer to a question given by the Minister of Education. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the opportunity for this adjournment proceeding to address a question I posed on March 29, 2011, to the Minister of Education regarding a new public high school in Riverside South and a new public elementary school in Barrhaven. After providing the minister with advance notice of my question, I was disappointed the minister refused to provide a reasonable, rational and non-partisan response.

Nepean-Carleton is home to two of the fastest-growing communities in Ontario, if not all of Canada. That means that we have to ensure infrastructure like the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge is completed and that health centres like those aligned with the Pinecrest-Queensway and Kemptville hospitals are built, open and accessible.

It also means that we need to keep up to the growing demands of our new and exceedingly growing populations in Barrhaven and Riverside South, namely, by building new public schools—an elementary school in Barrhaven and Riverside South's first public high school.

Recently I spoke with a former colleague of mine from the city of Ottawa municipality, Ian Cross. Mr. Cross is responsible for research and growth projections at the city of Ottawa, and he is often called upon by city councillors and planners who rely on his analysis. Here is what Mr. Cross told me: In Barrhaven alone, our population is 70,000 people. In five years, it will be 81,000.

By 2021, Mr. Cross suggests Barrhaven will reach 90,000 people.

Across the Rideau River, and soon to be connected to Barrhaven through the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge, is the community of Riverside South, where 11,000 residents reside. In the next 10 years, that population is set to double to 20,000 people, according to Mr. Cross.

How does this high growth stack up to school capacity in the English public education system in Nepean-Carleton? It doesn't.

In Barrhaven, where I've had the pleasure of working to secure funding for the new Longfields-Davidson Heights Secondary School, we see its feeder schools are near, at or well over capacity. A few examples: Barrhaven's oldest school, Barrhaven Public School, is 207 students over capacity; so is Farley Mowat, by 312 students; Adrienne Clarkson Elementary School, by 65 students; and Berrigan Elementary School is 86 students over capacity. Each of these schools have portables infringing on the kids' playgrounds. Other public elementary schools, like Cedarview Middle School, Jockvale Elementary School and Mary Honeywell Elementary School, are just under or at capacity. Clearly, there is a need for another public elementary school in our community.

Kennedy MacLeod, no relation, said, "We need funding. We have asked to build a new school in Barrhaven to relieve the schools we currently have that are over capacity."

Jenna Swinwood said, "There is no doubt an additional public school in Barrhaven is more than necessary to accommodate the population growth we are currently seeing. As Barrhaven grows even further south, we are already seeing children being sent a long way from their communities. Having something closer to home would be easier on everyone and help the communities stay strong."

And Jennie Maynard added, "Barrhaven and Riverside South are both desperately in need of public schools to take the pressure off the overcrowded schools that are currently housing our children. We owe it to our children to offer them appropriate and local schooling."

And then there is the matter of the high-growth community of Riverside South, which is currently without a public high school. I first raised the need for this school in 2008 with the previous Minister of Education. I've met with community leaders and parents, like Scott Hodge, who would like to have their children have the opportunity of a public education in their own community without being transferred to another board or being bused out of the community entirely.

Presently, Steve MacLean Public School has an enrolment of 805 elementary students. It is over capacity by 256 kids; it has seven portables. Not only does that elementary school require upgrades and an expansion, but those children also deserve a high school education in their own community. Again, I was disappointed when the minister chose not to give me a reasonable answer.

John Bruce, the community president of Riverside South, told me, "The expansion of the Riverside com-

munity to 4,600 homes will far exceed the existing school structure and will create more portables. There are clearly more residences with young families than the current school structure can support."

The voters who sent me to Queen's Park deserve an answer from the Minister of Education. I want to assure my constituents that they can count on me to continue to fight for a new elementary school in Barrhaven and a new high school in Riverside South. Our students deserve it, our families need it and our growth demands it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The parliamentary assistant has up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak to this matter.

I think the member from Nepean-Carleton very much knows that there is a process in place in terms of determining the capital requests of the boards. We know boards like the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, which I work with very closely with, submit regularly an updated list of their capital priorities. We recently received a new list from the same board. It is obviously important to respect this process and listen to the boards, who represent and better understand their community, and obviously the locally elected trustees, who know their communities very well.

We will be reviewing all the requests of capital priorities that we've received from all 72 school boards. We'll be evaluating all of those projects in consultation with the local school boards in an effort to meet the needs of students and communities across the province. I can assure you that we'll be working very closely with the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board to review its process.

Because of this process that exists, I think it's important that the good people of Nepean-Carleton know that since 2003, since the McGuinty government came into office, there have been 13 new schools that have been built in Nepean-Carleton—13 new schools. Jean-Robert-Gauthier; Pierre-Savard; Michaëlle-Jean in Barrhaven; St. Jerome Catholic Elementary School in Gloucester; St. Francis Xavier in Gloucester; Steve MacLean in Gloucester; Briarbrook Public School in Kanata; St. Andrew Catholic Elementary School in Nepean; St. Emily in Nepean; Berrigan Elementary School in Nepean; Farley Mowat Public School in Nepean; Longfields-Davidson Heights in Nepean; and Bernard-Grandmaitre—actually, I recently attended that school—in Ottawa: 13 new schools, because we have a process in place, that were built in Nepean-Carleton, the riding the honourable member represents.

Since 2003, the McGuinty government has invested \$5.4 billion to improve the energy efficiency and the condition of schools, and to build new schools and additions to them. We have, in fact, built 400 new schools in the province of Ontario since 2003, and 100 more are planned or under way. We are talking about over 18,500 repair and renewal projects that are under way or complete.

What did the previous government, the Harris-Hudak government, do when they were in office when it came to

education? Guess what? They closed about 500 schools across the province. They didn't open new schools; they, in fact, closed 500 schools across the province. Our kids lost about 26 million learning days due to labour unrest. I find it a bit rich being criticized when you have built 13 new schools in the last eight years alone in the riding of Nepean–Carleton.

Let's talk about the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board. The funding for the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board has gone up by nearly 40% while enrolment has declined by 7.8%—funding up, enrolment down. Per pupil funding has increased by over 51%, and the funding for special education for the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board has increased by over 45% since 2003.

In terms of capital funding for the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, \$178.4 million thus far has been invested. I can give you a breakdown, but it really demonstrates that in all of Ottawa we have built 34 schools since 2003. Out of that, 13 are in the member's riding.

Let me talk about another very important initiative that has been introduced by the government: full-day kindergarten, which we know that the Leader of the Opposition and his PC Party opposes. They are going to shut down and freeze all full-day kindergarten programs. In the member's riding in Nepean–Carleton, 17 schools will have full-day kindergarten by September 2012: seven schools already as of September 2010, two more schools in September 2011 and eight more schools in 2012. That's 54 classes and 1,349 students. I am sure that those parents are really not going to appreciate full-day kindergarten not being offered in those 17 schools serving 1,349 students.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1821.

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of Ontario**

Second Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**



Wednesday 20 April 2011

Mercredi 20 avril 2011

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 20 April 2011

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 20 avril 2011

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUILDING FAMILIES AND SUPPORTING YOUTH TO BE SUCCESSFUL ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 FAVORISANT LA FONDATION DE FAMILLES ET LA RÉUSSITE CHEZ LES JEUNES

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 19, 2011, on the motion for second reading of Bill 179, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act respecting adoption and the provision of care and maintenance / *Projet de loi 179, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille en ce qui concerne l'adoption et les soins et l'entretien.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very pleased to rise today for second reading debate on the Building Families and Supporting Youth to Be Successful Act. This legislation is the next step in our improvements to Ontario's adoption system and will, if passed, allow thousands more kids the opportunity to live happy lives in stable, loving, permanent families.

We know that 7,000 crown wards currently have access orders which prevent them from being eligible for adoption. This legislation proposes to remove those barriers. This legislation will also help build a brighter future for Ontario's crown wards. These changes would allow youth whose care arrangements ended at age 16 or 17 to return to their CAS to receive supports until age 21. We need to ensure that the door is wide open for Ontario's most vulnerable children and youth, so they have the tools they need to succeed.

Yesterday my parliamentary assistant, Mike Colle, introduced second reading of this important piece of legislation. I want to thank him; the member for Nipissing, Ms. Smith; and the member from Peterborough, Mr. Leal, as well as my colleagues on the other side of the House, for rising to speak to this bill.

I understand how personal and touching the issue of adoption is for so many people. I thank all of my col-

leagues for speaking to this legislation, and many of them for highlighting how this legislation, if passed, will improve our current adoption system. Ms. Smith and the member from Dufferin-Caledon both spoke about how their own families have been touched by and shaped through adoption.

I'm hopeful that in this particular debate, as we stand to speak to this bill, raise questions and discuss its principles, we continue to keep one thing in mind; that is, the kids and the families who will be affected by these important measures. We don't always have the opportunity to put politics aside in this House, but this particular legislation deserves our best efforts in this regard.

Yesterday I truly wanted to be in this House with my colleagues; however, over the last few days I've been hosting the first aboriginal child welfare summit in Ontario, which was held at Fort William First Nation. The summit brought together approximately 200 representatives from political-territorial organizations, independent First Nations, aboriginal service delivery organizations and so many others to continue the conversation about how we can best meet the unique needs of aboriginal children and their families. It was an incredible opportunity to learn about successful practices and innovative approaches that will help us work together to transform the future for aboriginal kids and their families.

The traditional model of foster care or adoption is not necessarily the right path to permanency for these children. That is why the Child and Family Services Act also recognizes customary care as a way for children to find permanent homes. Customary care is the care and supervision of an aboriginal child by a person who is not the child's parent, according to the customs of the child's band or native community. Each community defines its own traditions, and discussions at the aboriginal child welfare summit solidified our commitment to work with CASs and First Nations to increase the use of these arrangements so that more aboriginal children and youth are able to stay connected to their communities, cultures and traditions, and in permanent homes.

I understand that the need to respect the aboriginal models of care was raised in debate yesterday, and I'm pleased to hear that. Also discussed within the context of yesterday's debate were some questions with respect to openness orders, notice provisions, the implementation of subsidies, supporting our kids with special needs and other work that needs to be done to modernize the child welfare sector. I'm pleased to hear that these thoughtful questions were raised on the floor of this Legislature, and I'm very happy to speak to some of them this morning.

In developing this legislation, we sought to ensure that it reflected a balanced approach for all parties, while keeping in mind one goal: our drive to find permanent homes for waiting kids. The proposed legislation is very child-focused. It allows for contact with birth families while still respecting the expectations of prospective parents. The proposed legislation strikes the right balance, because it is focused on what is best for the child.

In so many instances across the province, I have been told that an access order may exist yet no one is actively making use of that access. We don't want to limit a child's potential for a permanent family because of this. On the other hand, in cases where it would be in the child's best interest to maintain some contact with their birth family, the court can make an openness order under these new provisions.

At the same time, we must also keep in mind the wishes of those prospective parents who want to understand the nature of the relationship between the child and the people who may have access for openness orders. To balance this, the proposed legislation requires the judge who may be granting an openness order to consider the ability of the prospective parents to fulfill those terms. Again, all of these provisions have a common goal when trying to achieve this balance: What is in the best interest of the child.

I want to spend a few moments with respect to notice within the legislation. When a children's aid society intends to place a child for adoption, prior to placing the child in the adoptive home, the society must provide notice to any individual who has an access order with respect to the child. The notice will contain the following information: that the CAS intends to place the child for adoption, that the access order that person has will automatically end when the child is placed for adoption, and that the person whose access will terminate upon adoption may apply to the court for an openness order.

A 30-day notice period to bring an application for an openness order is consistent with many notice periods in the Family Law Act and is intended to balance the need to minimize the length of time before a child can be placed with an adoptive family and, at the same time, provide sufficient time for the person whose access will terminate to apply to the court for the openness order.

The package of reforms announced last week was not the first improvements we've made to our adoption system. Since establishing the expert panel, our government has taken a number of steps to increase the number of kids who have the opportunity to grow up in healthy, stable and permanent homes, while reducing the number of kids who come into CAS care. Last year alone, we increased the number of adoptions by 21%.

We made important changes to the funding model, which provided an 8% increase to CAS adoption funding. We established standardized home study and parent training programs. We asked the Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare to look at ways to strengthen and build on our successes in permanency, including adoption, to improve our child welfare system and achieve the best outcomes for kids.

0910

In 2006, we did make some changes that allowed for judges to use openness orders as another tool to increase permanency. An effective government takes action, waits for results, assesses those results and then takes further action if the attendant results are not being achieved. While we did introduce the openness order as a tool in 2006, we have not seen the level of uptake we would consider to be significant, and that is why we are proposing this legislation, which would fully remove a barrier to permanency for over 7,000 crown wards.

In addition to this, we will implement an education strategy targeted to the family law bench and bar, as well as CASs, to increase the use of existing openness mechanisms. We will do so because we are committed to ensuring that these changes deliver measurable results for thousands of Ontario kids and families.

Yesterday, the Legislature heard about the work our government is doing to modernize the child welfare system. It's important to note that funding for CASs has increased by over 30% since 2003. In the last decade, funding has gone from \$500 million to over \$1.5 billion, and this year 72% of CASs are receiving more funding than last year.

Our government knows that our child welfare system must be modernized, and that is why we established the Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare. The commission has made recommendations to reduce administrative burden and has taken the first steps to initiate the amalgamation of some CASs so they become more sustainable. As part of their work, there will also be advice given with respect to the current funding formula, and the priorities described within our package of adoption reforms will be of paramount consideration during those deliberations.

It is very important to be clear on the issue of subsidies, as it seems there may have been some concern that this is not mapped out in the legislation. We know that many CASs are already providing targeted subsidies to make it possible for families to adopt children in care, and for this, no legislative amendments are required. We know that 46 CASs are currently administering over 2,000 subsidy agreements across the province, and we need to understand what that looks like on the ground. Our first step will be to seek their advice and that of other experts and better understand how we can build on these experiences across the province.

Another important subject that was raised during debate yesterday was kids in care who have special needs. We know that 82% of crown wards have special needs, and it goes without saying that our package of legislative and policy reforms will connect directly with those kids who need our supports the most.

Our government is confident that our package of legislative changes and other supports will help young people in the care of children's aid societies and prospective adoptive parents build the lives they've always dreamed of.

I am heartened that Ontario's adoption and child protection stakeholders share our confidence. I have re-

ceived many letters of support from Ontarians over the last week. One prospective adoptive mom wrote, "Thank you on behalf of all of us adoptive parents and all those children who don't have a voice." A mentor to a former crown ward wrote, "Thank you ... how much better the lives of many children would be with stable families who could give them security and help them rebuild trust in people." This is incredibly encouraging. But the greatest encouragement I take comes in knowing that the young people who stand to benefit the most have thanked us for the important steps we are taking. They have told us that every kid in Ontario deserves a family and that nothing compares to the love and support that a permanent family can provide.

One week ago today, we introduced our exciting package of adoption and crown ward support reforms. Attending that announcement was Oakville author Deborah Brennan. Ms. Brennan is a member of the Adoption Council of Canada and has written and published a book entitled *Labours of Love*. It chronicles the journeys of Canadians who have opened their hearts and their lives to give a child a forever family.

Ms. Brennan gave me a copy of her book when she was here last week, and I want to leave you with a quote from the book. "Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe, call it a family. Whatever you call it, whoever you are, you need one." And so today I call on all members to support this important legislation, which will give that gift of a forever family to thousands of waiting kids across the province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: This is an important subject. In fact, I thought yesterday our critic made some very supportive remarks which, and in that sense, would imply to us that our caucus is supportive of this.

I think putting kids in care at the very centre of this whole discussion is a very important position to take. Just a couple of things: You're saying that the subsidies could be targeted by, as you said in your remarks, the 46 children's aid societies that are in fact exercising 2,000 of those subsidy agreements. That's important. I think that, for instance, grandparents or other members of the child's immediate relatives have first right, I believe, and they may need support. In the case of grandparents being the adoptive parents, in the case of where the child's parents have separated and all these things weren't resolvable, I'd be supportive of that.

In the case of grandparents—I am a grandparent. I want to put on the record here, with a little diversion, if I can, that last Friday, April 15, at about 7 o'clock in the evening, my son Andrew and his wife, Alison, had a little baby girl. They've named her Alexandra Lee. She was seven pounds, six ounces. She was born in Cobourg, and the proud grandparents now are Ed and Brenda Wielgos, who live in Whitby, and my wife, Peggy, and I. That's really putting important priorities first. That's just my own public service announcement.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Congratulations.

Mr. John O'Toole: I promised them I'd get it on the Hansard record. But it just shows how important grandparents are, because we were all there Friday night at the Cobourg hospital. This is an important way of recognizing that in the adoption arena it's just as important to grandparents in this overall equation to look at it and make sure they have the supports in place, so I'd be supportive of that provision.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: A Chatham grandmother, Wendy O'Riley, wonders how many more grandparents caring for their grandchildren will have their financial support terminated by this government and local welfare officials. She had to go to a tribunal to get reinstated. She makes \$15,000 a year and has brought up her 13-year-old granddaughter off and on since she was three years old.

This government still hasn't changed the directives on the temporary care assistance. I brought a bill forward to change it so that these grandparents wouldn't have to struggle on fixed incomes and wouldn't have to come to Toronto to tribunals and wouldn't have extreme problems when they are cut off.

The government will give away billions and billions of dollars to big business, but they'll cut off a grandmother of \$262 a month to bring up her grandchild. Then they've got the nerve and audacity to tell them to go on to foster care, which costs the government \$900 to \$1,100 per month per child, and here is a grandmother trying to bring up her grandchild and keep the family together for \$260; and I think it's \$186 for every additional child.

I've got grandmothers in Hamilton who are bringing up two or three of their grandchildren for various reasons, and they're getting less than \$700 a month. If they were in the system, those kids would be covered for almost \$4,000 to \$5,000, counting their dental and glasses. It doesn't make sense from a fiscal point of view; it doesn't make sense as a moral situation. This government, to date, has not changed the directives. My bill would have changed the directives to support these grandparents who are doing yeoman service for our province and are being neglected by this government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I want to again commend the minister for going up to Thunder Bay with the First Nations who are concerned about the accommodation of their special needs in this new legislation. I think it was critically important to be there, because they have special challenges, and this legislation recognizes that.

The other thing is that this is about removing barriers to adoption. Right now, 75% of the children who are crown wards cannot be adopted because there are these technical access orders that prevent adoption. The CASs can't even contemplate adoption, because these access orders are in place. This legislation removes that barrier.

I also want to say that this also starts to remind people of how critically vital these adoptive families are.

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Those of us who have children, grandchildren, know how challenging it is to raise the family, to pay the bills, to nurture children, to be there at the hospital—as the member for Durham said—when your grandchildren are sick. But I really think it's about time we started to take our hats off to parents who have the courage and the determination to adopt children. These people are heroes, because we know how difficult it is already with your natural birth children, but as for Ontarians who will come forward and adopt children, we should recognize the critical role they play, especially children that, in many cases—as the minister said, 80% of the children who are crown wards have some special-needs requirements. Whatever we can do to encourage, remove barriers and to support adoptive parents so they can create this new family for these children is something that is very, very worthwhile.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to see that in the minister's comments, she reacted to a number of the questions that I talked about in my speech yesterday. I'll focus on the 82% of kids in care who have special needs. I think it's very important that we start to try to deal with offering the supports and services and, quite frankly, the continuity that parents need who wish to adopt and bring children with special needs into their family.

I raised, very briefly, during my comments that one particular family is trying to deal with the right hand and the left hand arguing over whether they should get assistance for children with severe disabilities, which is a program operated out of children and youth services, which the minister would know, and the two different children's aid societies that have been offering a permanency funding subsidy for three adoptive children that the parents have brought into their family. They're now in a situation where, a year after the permanency funding has been pulled, they have to go to a tribunal. They've been getting this funding for 12 years. The children's aid societies understand the importance of the funding, and yet we have a case where the children's aid society is essentially fighting with children and youth services. I would really like to see, perhaps in committee, perhaps with amendments, some way to deal with those families and those situations, because it is simply unacceptable for the family to have to deal with those challenges when they are already trying to deal with other challenges of children with special needs.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The Minister for Children and Youth Services has up to two minutes to respond.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to acknowledge the members for Durham, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Eglinton–Lawrence and Dufferin–Caledon for their comments. The thread through all of those comments was very much the importance of family. I congratulate the member from Durham on the new addition to his family. The kick-off of his comments on this piece of legislation,

I think, brings to focus for all of us why this legislation is so important: because it is the opening of a pathway to the creation of a family, a forever family for so many youths and young people in our province.

For me, one of the critical pieces was, from seeking the advice of some of the experts in the field, knowing that we would be making a difference. I just want to comment on someone like Cheryl Appell. She's the co-chair of the adoption working group on the Expert Panel on Infertility and Adoption and a well-known counsel in the city of Toronto who has expertise in these areas. She said, "These changes have been advocated for many years, and it is wonderful to see that, finally, there has been the courage to put this plan forward. This legislative change will be a powerful and welcomed tool in the hands of children's aid societies, who bear responsibility for finding a permanent home for children who cannot return to their family of origin, and it introduces new judicial responsibility, which I believe will also be welcomed."

When individuals with the knowledge and expertise, such as Cheryl Appell, make those kinds of comments, it really gives me a lot of hope that we will make significant change, and we're committed to doing that. We have continued to make efforts and build on the work that we've done.

In the last remaining seconds that I have in this response, I'll continue to advance my call to all Ontario families to look within their homes and their hearts and make a determination of whether they might be able to be the forever family for one of these young people in our province. When these legislative changes come through, we will have removed that barrier for 7,000 kids, and we will have 7,000 kids waiting for forever families. I hope that Ontarians will meet that call.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to rise today and speak on this bill.

There are two things that I first of all want to focus on, and they are what I consider to be the essence of the bill: the question of access orders and the opportunities for 16- to 18-year-olds under this piece of proposed legislation.

Access orders, I think, have to be understood in the greater context of what has historically been the challenge for those children who found themselves as crown wards. In the preceding piece of legislation and prior to that, the issue of being a crown ward was that it signified that there was still a relationship with either a birth parent, a family member or some designated person, and that created a blockage in the ability of people to go ahead with adoption procedures.

I think of some of my friends and neighbours who have been foster parents and, for them, the frustration of seeing children passed from one place to another in the foster care process because they had, through no fault of their own, a sort of stigma in being a crown ward. I know that in more than one case, people—the foster parents,

that is—would have entertained the idea of being the adopting parents but for those legal restrictions. So I can't say enough about the importance of this process of access orders and putting a time limit on them.

One is always caught in the balance of being fair. I think that previously, with court orders in place, people thought that this was the most fair way to deal with it. But when you look at the experience that children have in the foster system as crown wards, they're just sitting there, waiting. They're in limbo. While I don't want to take away at all from the good work done by foster parents, everyone knows that the permanency is missing. So to be able to bring a conclusion to this limbo process of being a crown ward, I think, is a very, very important step that is encompassed in this bill.

The second area that I think is also very, very important is the question of recognizing the ability of 16- to 18-year-olds to make a decision and then reverse it, and have the opportunity to remain in the system until the age of 21.

I remember very vividly a phone call that I received a few years ago from a young constituent of mine who had, for the first time in his life, in his own words, stability and support—emotional, physical and intellectual support—in the home that he was in. He was someone who, through the instability of his own life, had been definitely in the category of a difficult person to foster. This couple who had him had obviously accomplished miracles, in the words of my young constituent, who saw that these people were able to change his life. It was just heart-breaking to have to talk to him and hear his story and know that I had no tools to be able to do anything. There was nothing that I or anyone else at that point could do. I did, of course, talk to his caseworker, but the facts were the facts.

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I think that this was a particularly vulnerable part of the age group of crown wards. It's worth it when you know that you are successful. You know you can't be successful in every instance, but one is one too many, so I think that providing this kind of opportunity for the 16- to 18-year-olds is extremely important.

I also want to talk about the children's aid society realities as I see them. I'm constantly drawn to the fact that they have a mandated responsibility, mandated obligations, but their financial support is not sustainable; it does not cover in an appropriate way that for which they are mandated.

As a member for York region, I'm acutely conscious of the underfunding, both historic and otherwise, for social services in York region, including, obviously, the children's aid. One of my friends was one of those people who had to be laid off last year. I think it's just wrong on so many levels, wrong because the young people, the children who are the clients, if we might use that term, are the people who are most affected by those kinds of changes, redirections, new people and things like that.

We know from the conversations that have taken place already, from the debate that has taken place already with

this bill, that home study only accounts for 2% of the budget. Certainly, I've had conversations with people on waiting and waiting and waiting and then the waiting list gets so long that they're the people who don't get on a waiting list. They're the people who pay for their own home studies. Clearly, this in itself is an impediment to being able to have a better flow of people from crown wardship to adoption. There are some of these systemic issues which, obviously, the bill does not reflect.

I also want to take observers back to Bill 210. At the time, I was the critic for the children and youth file, so there are some things I remember about this bill and the kinds of discussions and issues that were raised at the time.

I want to quote from two parts; one is where I'm speaking on second reading, and the second is where I'm speaking on third reading. The first quote, then, is from my remarks with regard to second reading. Here I'm discussing the importance of the openness agreements:

"I think we just have to make sure that those options are understood and that we are going to ensure that the process does what its stated goal is, and that, of course, is to increase the number of adoptions.

"The other interesting thing about the openness agreements is that when you look at the part of the bill that deals with them, they are done primarily through the courts. So I would just point out that they revert to a court process. Again I have to say rhetorically, does this create issues around timeliness and cost if openness orders are going to be done by the courts?

"I think it's clear that we, as a group of legislators, are very conscious of the need to be able to provide ongoing support for the agencies that are providing the service and child protection, and we have to be able to find the best methods for children, because the goal is clearly to make a process where a child's life is ... better."

I go on to mention that since the courts are a very expensive part of the process that children's aid deals with, obviously my concern then is captured here, where I say, "... ensure that not only is there going to be the process that will work in the best interest, but also that we're not going to be looking at the cost being a driver of the whole process."

As a result of the passage of the bill, we had the opportunity to hear a number of experts in the public hearings. I have two that I would like to refer to. The first one is Dr. Brenda Nutter of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies. She made what I think is a comment that should be an echo at this point, and that is that "this legislation will require a substantial commitment by the government to the education of the public and of those in the field who will be charged with the implementation of Bill 210." She goes on: "It changes the face of public adoption. It is true that more children will receive better service through permanency initiatives. In addition, in-care costs will be reduced. But as this process moves ahead, it is important that the needs of adoptive families be recognized and fully supported as they manage the everchanging needs of their older and

special-needs children. In the public sector, we believe that the expansion of post-adoption services is a critical part of the infrastructure that will allow the openness provisions of Bill 210 to be successfully implemented.”

James Dubray of the Durham Children’s Aid Society told the committee about that children’s aid society’s experience with openness, as follows: “In the past year, we have been piloting open adoptions. Our experiences generally have not been positive. We have learned that in the making of and having agreements in place for adoption placement, the natural family sometimes have changed their minds with regard to the adoption placement, and have sought to have it overturned by using the provisions of the Children’s Law Reform Act.”

I want to finish my comments on Bill 210 with one final comment from my third reading speech in 2006. “In committee, in clause-by-clause, I offered an amendment that would have required the government and the societies to be accountable for increasing the rate of adoption.

“My amendment would have required a three-year review of the effectiveness of openness agreements and whether or not the rates of adoption have increased. Unfortunately, the government members chose to vote down my amendment.

“Obviously, I wish they had accepted it, as it would have mandated this specific area of accountability for increasing the adoption of crown wards.

“As we know, there is a process for a five-year review, but when you’re looking at stepping into what in many ways are uncharted waters, I think it’s important that the government look at specifically how effective this process has been.”

Just think: If the Liberal members had voted through our PC amendment five years ago, we could have reviewed this legislation two years ago and made a change. I have to wonder how many crown wards have lost out at a chance of a loving adoptive family over the last five years because of the failure of Bill 210.

I would just like to finish with a few comments going back to Bill 179. It’s very clear from this debate and from the comments made by many others that there is much more to do. Obviously, the fact that we know that 82% of all crown wards are special-needs children cries out for some recognition, particularly from the results of the all-party standing committee recommendations. The other problem that I think is not being addressed here and that the bill is obviously silent on is the fact that as children are crown wards, they have access to more programming that is paid for than those who are adopted.

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Again, I go back to one of my friends who had fostered three children. The most heart-wrenching part of the process for her was giving up these children. She had to give them up because she couldn’t afford to raise them. It’s that simple. When you are talking about the need for obviously those kinds of unique people in our community who are prepared to open their homes to be foster parents, I think that at the same time we need to be

looking at how we are going to encourage and support—one of the deputants on Bill 210 referred to post-adoption support. I think, probably, that would fit with my concern about the fact that there is a huge problem when you have, on the one hand, 82% of crown wards who are special-needs children. You want to encourage adoption, and yet, literally, the buck stops. I think that that will continue to be a huge obstacle for many, many families who would be able to otherwise, as the minister said, open their hearts. They will also have to open their wallets.

I just want to finish on a quote that my daughter actually sent to me. It says—and I think it encompasses the spirit in which we ultimately find ourselves in supporting the bill: “Not born of my mother’s tummy but from her heart.”

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you to the member from York-Simcoe. She has done her research, and it was a good presentation.

The expert panel reports that the problems in the system are well documented and the impacts of these problems are staggering. The expert panel reported, “Former crown wards who age out of the system are less likely to finish high school, more likely to become parents themselves at a young age, more likely to be users of the mental health system, more likely to require social assistance, more likely to rely on homeless shelters, to experience poverty as adults and more likely to be in conflict with the law. The long-term costs to society when children do not have permanent homes are staggering. The human costs, in terms of personal suffering and unfulfilled potential, are heartbreaking.”

It seems that this bill is taking a step forward in terms of increasing the number of crown wards who could be eligible for adoption. This is good and positive, but does it do enough? Will it address the underlying issues, and perhaps, most fundamentally, will it increase the likelihood that these children and youth are adopted?

There is nothing in the bill to increase the number of prospective adoptive parents. This is one step of many that experts, practitioners, parents and children have called for when it comes to improving adoption in our province. Even more so, why such a small step when the government has had ample opportunity to move forward on easy-to-implement and cost-neutral solutions?

The other question, which surely we will be better equipped to answer following committee hearings: Are we balancing the rights of all the parties involved correctly? Are the rights of the children, birth parents and adoptive parents, as well as aboriginal communities, being treated fairly?—frustrating for the NDP and surely for the stakeholders who have given countless hours of work to reforming Ontario’s adoption system. The expert panel report is evidence of this. We see well-articulated and well-reasoned suggestions that are nowhere to be found in this bill. However, we congratulate the members of the expert panel who have worked hard to get us where we are today.

It is worth taking some time to review what is missing from this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank the member for York–Simcoe for her comments and, in particular, for the lovely last quote that she ended her submission with.

I want to spend just a couple of minutes talking about how the provisions in this legislation are a new approach and do add to the previous provisions with respect to openness. It is absolutely critical, yes, that we will undertake an education campaign for the judiciary, for children's aid societies and for lawyers to understand what is changing, because the removal of a provision that has, for more than 30 years, prevented a child with any kind of access order from even being eligible for adoption, who couldn't plan for adoption, is a very big change in the adoption world.

I want to spend a couple of moments, if I can, providing some information with respect to the detail of the test that will be used by the court in determining whether this new type of openness order should be issued on application. The first thing will be: Is it in the best interests of the child? The second thing will be that, if the child is 12 years of age or older, they will have to consent to that order, and that will be a determining factor in whether they want a continued relationship or whether they do have a relationship.

The courts will also have to consider two other factors in deciding whether to make an openness order: whether the order would permit the continuation of a relationship with a person that is beneficial and meaningful to the child—and again, our focus is always on what is best for the child; is it an important and meaningful relationship to them?—and secondly, the ability of the prospective adoptive parents to comply with that arrangement after the adoption order, because they will be the family of the child at that point. We want to make sure that those adoptive families who come forward, who open their hearts and homes to children, would be able to comply with the provisions, always focusing on the best interests of the child.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to respond to the comments made by my caucus colleague from York–Simcoe. I found it very helpful that she spent a good deal of her time talking about the previous legislation from five years ago—Bill 210, I believe it was. I was not a member here at the time, so I appreciate her bringing her expertise and history to that debate.

I think she raised some excellent points about how we are in fact reviewing and trying to improve what initially was attempted to be solved five years ago. To me, it reinforces the value of a sunshine review act, something where we can reflect on what we have brought forward: Is it passing what we attempted to solve? Is it making positive changes for Ontario families and Ontario children? To me, this is a beautiful example of the importance of those

reviews, whether it's legislation or policies that we bring forward collectively.

As the member from York–Simcoe pointed out, if her amendment from Bill 210 had been passed, then we would have been having this discussion two years ago and trying to solve some of the issues for more adoptions and encouraging more adoptions instead of having to wait five years. So I'm pleased that she was able to bring those issues forward with her discussions of Bill 179, and I'll have to discuss it further with her, because it sounds like it's a good amendment to bring forward for Bill 179 as well.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This is very close to home for me, because I'm both adopted—when I was about two years old, I was very fortunate to find a home at a point in my life when I didn't think I was going to—and I'm also an adoptive parent, which was a very hard struggle for me, because for most of my life, being gay in Canada made it impossible. You couldn't pass the threshold. Partly because I valued my family so much—because I almost went through my life without one, and have often thought of the consequences of what my life would have been like had I not done that. Some of the human characteristics that God gave me when I came into this world made my relationship with my parents particularly challenging as I discovered this.

My son, whom I fostered after several years—it was extremely difficult. I remember the political fights. One of the reasons I became a Liberal was because the Liberal Party was the most accepting party of my family. I had some rather long, protracted fights with politicians from other parties who were very opposed to people like me being parents, and who also wanted to criminalize my child, who has fetal alcohol syndrome. If you've ever worked with or raised children who have FAS, it's extremely challenging, because these children don't have a lot of restraint and are easily suggestible.

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I always get a little nervous when I hear about law and order and treating children in adult court, because when I worked on the streets with kids, 80% of the kids that I met were abused by their parents or by other family members, which is what led to that, which is why I think the screening process and the exchanges are important.

I also had a very clean start with my new family, so I think that removing the access orders in allowing children to be adopted is critical.

To me, this may be one of the most important pieces of legislation I get to vote on, and I want to thank the minister and other members who have spoken so positively.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from York Simcoe has up to two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I wish to thank the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, the Minister of Children and Youth Services, the Minister of Research and Innovation, and the member for Dufferin–Caledon.

I appreciate the comments that have been made. I would agree with the minister that this is a big change, and I think that's why people on all sides of the House take it very seriously.

I think, in responding to the Minister of Research and Innovation, there aren't many of us who haven't been touched one way or the other by friends, immediate family—I think most people have some experience with this and understand, therefore, the fragility of the relationships and the importance of those relationships.

The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek talked about the details around the stats for children who age out. I think about it, as a parent myself, and think about how important the role is, to be able to provide the appropriate supports and stability for children growing up. Even when they're 18, you discover that your job really isn't over. That's when you think you've become the empty nester, and then, in a few years, boom, they're back.

Mr. Paul Miller: With friends.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Yeah, with friends. We can joke about that, but what we're really saying is that there are those children who never have had that opportunity. That is what verges on criminal, and that is why I think we all agree that we have to do a better job.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It is a pleasure to speak to Bill 179. I want to say from the outset how much I enjoyed the comments from the members from Dufferin—Caledon and York—Simcoe, because their remarks are very sincere and they are trying, as indeed all members here are trying, to help with this legislation, help to improve it and do the best that we can to make adoption easier and to make it easier for foster parents to do that.

I was particularly struck by the member from Toronto Centre and the description of his situation and the adoption of his child who has fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. That's a tough one. Most people don't know how complicated that is. Teachers understand the problems, but they don't understand how to identify the problem, because even doctors don't know how to identify that particular problem. So you're suffering with a particular issue, and the adoptive parents don't quite understand what it is, don't quite know what to do, until finally a diagnosis is given that allows adoptive parents to deal with it. It's really intense and it's complicated, and I say God bless those foster parents who take that job on, because it is a full-time emotional and economic responsibility. Many of us would take on that job, but with a great deal of thought, would take it on with much pain, and most of us don't take it on. So those that do, I have a great deal of respect for them.

I think the minister is genuinely trying to improve the system, and I support the efforts.

The two points—the member from Dufferin—Caledon and our member from Beaches—East York raised these issues as well. The two efforts are that Bill 179 amends the Child and Family Services Act to state that a society can plan for adoption of a crown ward who has an access

order. We know that currently less than 10% of Ontario's approximately 9,000 crown wards are adopted every year, and of those, 7,000 of them have a special need, as has been mentioned by many. If they have that kind of a special need, we as a state have to worry about how we facilitate the adoption so that it can happen and how we facilitate it so that the adoptive parents can indeed take that on with supports, because if we don't provide the supports, I'm not sure that adoption, no matter how much easier we're making it, will happen.

The member from Dufferin—Caledon, as did our member from Beaches—East York, raised this yesterday: where we say that we have a perverse incentive in the system. If you are a foster parent, you have access to funding that will ensure that the child in care has access to the services they need, but upon adoption, you lose access to that, and that doesn't seem to make any sense. If we're indeed trying to encourage people to adopt, but we give very few incentives, we're not going to enable adoption, we're not going to facilitate it, and it's likely not to happen. Our adoption process has flatlined, in spite of the changes the government has made, for the last four years, and so the question to us as legislators is, can we make that better, and if we can, why aren't we doing it? If we're not doing it, well, it's not going to make the job easier. We hope that these changes will make it easier, but I don't know.

The other thing that is major here, and which I support, is the number of changes that help to support crown wards, including the ability of crown wards who leave care at or above the age of 16 but under 18 to return to the care. We think this is good. We thought it illogical and not reasonable that someone who leaves the care of a children's aid society at 16 loses supports. We are happy that the government is dealing with that particular problem, because these young men and women need help and need support.

These are the two main measures that are included in this bill that we think are good. They will help; there's no doubt about it.

We know that the minister talked about aboriginal people and issues connected to adoption as it relates to aboriginal people. I know that she had a meeting with them. I'm not sure that the meeting was talking about adoption. It may have happened; I'm not sure. I know it was about something else, but hopefully aboriginal people raised these issues. I don't know whether the minister and/or the ministry consulted with aboriginal people, and if they haven't, that would be a serious, serious oversight, given the history of residential schools and the removal of aboriginal kids from their homes—taken away in such a brutal manner that caused devastation in those communities for a long, long time. This is something that we need to be careful about, and this is something that we need to move carefully on. So I am hoping that the minister has indeed done consultations with aboriginal people, and if not, before the passage of this bill, I'm hoping that she does that, so that as we move this bill into committee, we will hopefully get their point of view and hopefully

get amendments that they believe might be needed in order to make this bill reflect aboriginal communities in particular.

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We know that children's aid societies have struggled to stay afloat for a long time, that they have not managed to manage their responsibilities with the shortage of funding that they have experienced over the years. We know the government has made an effort to deal with that; whether it solved the problem, I really don't know. But we know that historically there have been funding issues and funding problems that I suspect have not been fully addressed. That's something to deal with.

We want to thank the Expert Panel on Infertility and Adoption, the Raising Expectations group that has dealt with this. We know that they have made many recommendations that are not in this bill. I suppose, and I suspect the government has reasons for not dealing with them; I don't know why. But when I read from their report in terms of what they recommend, it seems reasonable. Given that the minister is here today and she's answering a lot of questions, I'm hoping that she will deal with it.

One of the recommendations the panel made is in the section on system standardization and coordination. It says: "The central problem is the current 'patchwork quilt' nature of adoption services in Ontario. Services are not structured in a way that makes sense for children or families—or even service providers. In fact, there is really no 'system' at all. Service providers tend to operate in relative isolation, often with few connections between them. Adoption policies, legislation, guidelines and standards are not based on current research or best practices, are inconsistent across services and, in many cases, do not reflect the current realities of adoption—or the diversity of this province. Furthermore, insufficient information is collected about services and outcomes for children and families. Without evidence-based research, it is difficult to plan a comprehensive range of adoption services that anticipate and fully respond to children's, families' and service providers' needs."

The expert panel recommends the creation of a provincial adoption agency. I'm not sure whether the minister might want to comment as to why it is they haven't thought about implementing that. The panel provides necessary details of what this would look like, and they say, "Create a provincial adoption agency."

"We urge the government to create a new, centralized provincial adoption agency ... with a local service presence to:

- "—provide all interested families with the information they need to explore their potential to adopt;
- "—work with CASs to make appropriate and timely adoption plans for children in care;
- "—focus on finding families for older crown wards and crown wards with special needs;
- "—match and place crown wards with families;
- "—provide birth families and adoptive families support to negotiate and maintain openness when in the best interests of the child;

"—support families throughout the public adoption process and help families after the adoption is finalized."

Of all these recommendations, what is the government moving on? And if not, why haven't they adopted some of these very reasonable recommendations that I think all three political parties would support? We can see that virtually nothing recommended in terms of coordinating adoption services is in the bill. There is, and there will continue to be, a serious problem in terms of finding enough families to be adoptive parents to all of the children needing adoption in Ontario. We know that there are, I think, 1,500 parents who are ready to adopt. We need to deal with that. We need to find a way to increase that number; otherwise, the majority of these children that we are hoping would be adopted may not be adopted.

It seems to me that if we want more children to be adopted, particularly the 82% who have special needs, we're going to have to do something more than what the minister recommends in Bill 179.

We don't want to be critical of the efforts the minister is making; we want to talk about how we make it better. Because otherwise, the lives of these 9,000 young men and women who are in crown wards—they may not be adopted, and they may continue to suffer the problem as adults, in addition to having been in crown wards for a long, long time and/or in foster homes for a long, long time, and face perpetual problems that can never be dealt with.

Clearly, we want to support you, Minister. Whatever it is that you want to make by way of amendments based on what the expert panel has identified, I think all three political parties, particularly the opposition parties, are willing to help you. If you are ready to move on some other amendments, we say God bless. We want to help.

The whole point of having hearings—and I know you wanted to rush this, because there is some urgency on the one hand. On the other hand, because there is so much to be done and because so much has been recommended by way of what ought to be done, we want to make sure that there are enough hearings that we can get the best possible recommendations and suggestions that can be made by a range of people, to make sure that improvements are made.

I know, Minister, that there are a few other points that the member from Toronto–Danforth made yesterday, and you may have covered some. But you might want to respond to some of these other issues that I don't think you've had an opportunity to speak to. I hope that, in your two minutes, you might just do that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I do thank the member for Trinity–Spadina for his comments, and I will try to speak to a few of the issues that he raised.

I'll certainly start with the first one, which is with respect to the two-day summit that was held in Fort William First Nation over the last couple of days. The focus of that summit was a variety of issues, but the heart of it was about customary care, which is the model and the

pathway to permanency for aboriginal children and youth. We look to that as the pathway for children to remain connected with their communities, connected with their family and connected with their traditions. This piece of legislation is a parallel pathway to permanency—and we are talking about adoptions and customary care as a pathway—and those provisions are already within the context of the Child and Family Services Act.

I do want to also speak to the issue of subsidies. As the member from Trinity–Spadina said, there are 2,000 active subsidy agreements being administered by CASs right across the province. The funding for the child welfare envelope has increased to almost \$1.5 billion annually. Each year, we determine how best to focus our efforts on improvements to the system. I would suggest to him that in the conversation that we're having here and in the context of this legislation, subsidies are one of those priorities.

These supports can be targeted, and in some instances they are, for a family adopting a child with special needs. We know that 82% of crown wards have special needs and may require enhanced support. Our interest is in developing a system-wide approach that's best for kids and is the best use of public dollars. That ties to the work under way by the commission to promote sustainable child welfare and its focus on outcomes, children and permanency for children.

We know that subsidies will increase the number of children and youth who can be adopted, and we look to doing that work in the weeks ahead.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to respond to the comments made by the member from Trinity–Spadina. We started talking about the children's aid society's funding issues, and the minister very briefly talked in her response about the fact that there are some subsidies out there.

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I think this is the challenge. They are a patchwork. There is no line item in children's aid societies' budgets that says, "This is available to you to assist families who wish to adopt children, who wish to take on the additional challenges of children with special needs," and that is raised in no way in Bill 179, although it was certainly raised in the recommendations made by the Expert Panel on Infertility and Adoption. That report, as we all know, is almost two years old. It was led by our now Governor General, David Johnston, and even when he accepted the role of Governor General, in his first public speaking as the GG he talked about the challenges of families and the desire to have more families have the ability to adopt children within their families. Yet we see nothing in Bill 179 that talks about this.

I understand that in the minister's press conference she was asked about it, and she said that she hopes the discussion continues. I guess my comment would be that after 23 months, we're probably past the point of discussion. That should have been happening as Bill 179 was

being drafted and being discussed, and I think it actually is a glaring error—or omission. I take back "error"; it's an omission in what we have before us in Bill 179.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank my colleague from Trinity–Spadina for his informed presentation.

The government knows that there are problems in encouraging adoption. The expert panel stated, "And we repeatedly heard from families pursuing public adoption that, instead of being treated as a valued resource for waiting children, agencies worked to screen them out of—rather than into—the adoption process. Many families told us they that were not welcomed nor provided with the opportunity to explore whether or not public adoption was the right choice for them. This approach could be due to a lack of resources within the CASs to embrace all prospective adoptive families and it could also be because many families initially inquire about adopting healthy infants. Some CASs told us that, at first contact with prospective adoptive families, they try to describe the realities of the needs of many of the children in their care.

"This may well have the unintended result of 'scaring off' families calling about healthy infants but who, with more complete information, might be more than willing to adopt a toddler, an older child or a child with special needs. The 'screening out' approach might be a natural outcome of the child protection orientation: approaching adoption using a child protection lens is completely understandable given how much child protection work CASs are engaged in on a daily basis."

The above quote raises some very big concerns, and none of that has figured into the bill we see in front of us today. Why?

The expert panel says this: "Despite this trend" of openness in adoption, "we learned that openness and how it may be implemented is not yet widely understood by some adoption workers and many adoptive families. We have heard that many CASs find the current tools, including openness orders and agreements, to be very complex—so complex, in fact, that some have established a policy not to use them. The complicated tools, coupled with concern about safety for children and fears about how openness may infringe on the 'right to parent,' make some CASs and adoptive families reluctant to consider openness in public adoptions." This certainly has to be addressed.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate this morning to pass comment on the member from Trinity–Spadina's comments, which I think for the most part were constructive, as they relate to Bill 179.

It's interesting, some of the things that bring us to this place. We come from a variety of backgrounds. I spent 12 years as a board member with the Halton Children's Aid Society, and three of those years as president of the society. Certainly, there were times that you saw where

the legislation was getting in the way of doing the right thing. That's not unusual, I don't think. Unfortunately, you could look at a number of jurisdictions and legislation that was put in place in the past for the very best of reasons but often ends up not doing the right thing. I think that when you see those things, when an expert panel brings forward that information to you, it's incumbent upon us as legislators to make the changes that are being recommended.

My thanks to the expert panel. I think Bill 179 is a good step forward. I get advice in my own community from a number of people—certainly from the adoption council. I've got a wonderful constituent by the name of Deborah Brennan. Deborah wrote a great book called *Labours of Love*, which outlines some of the personal stories of some fairly high-profile people and some ordinary people as well who have been through the adoption process, and what it has meant to them. It really paints a human face on the issue.

I also, from time to time, bump into Les Horne. I served with Les on the board of the children's aid society for a number of years. Les is a strong advocate for children in general but especially for those children who find themselves in vulnerable situations. He was the first child advocate for the province of Ontario, and I know that Les would see Bill 179 as a constructive step forward. Is it everything that everybody wants? Probably not; most bills aren't. Is it a good step forward for the province of Ontario and its kids? I think it is, and we should support it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member for Trinity-Spadina has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I appreciate the comments made by all members. I particularly want to focus on the comments made by the member from Dufferin-Caledon, because while the minister talked generally about all the money that she is putting into this sector, unless we specifically address the issue of 82% of the kids who have serious special-needs problems, if we don't find a way—the member from Dufferin-Caledon talked about a dedicated line that just addresses that. If we do not do that, my sense is that we're not going to get many parents who are willing to adopt, particularly when and if they know that the kids they're adopting have these special needs that bring on incredible emotional problems for the family that adopts and bring on incredible economic burdens that some cannot afford. If we don't deal with that, we've got a problem. I know that it costs money, but it costs more money not to deal with it. It costs more money for society in general and the individual in particular if we don't address it when we can.

If we don't set aside sufficient funds to deal with this specific issue, I think that we are not going to get a whole number of parents who are willing to adopt. That's what I want to encourage the minister to look at, including moving in on some of the recommendations made by the expert panel that I believe we could adopt today instead of waiting for another election.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): It being just past 10:15, I declare that this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1017 to 1030.

WEARING OF PINS

Mr. Rick Johnson: I believe we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear pins in recognition of the Make-A-Wish Foundation's World Wish Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Norm Miller: I would like to introduce Mr. Jeff Mole. He's the founder of Ontario's first public benefit community power co-operative. He's in the east members' gallery. I also remind people that there is an Ontario co-op reception this afternoon between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. in room 228. Please welcome Jeff.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It gives me great pleasure to introduce and welcome to Queen's Park today Mr. and Mrs. Russell and Audrey Moore from the great riding of Peterborough.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to recognize Jack Graves from the great town of Tillsonburg in the riding of Oxford county. I'd like to welcome him to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's a delight for me to introduce two guests in the east members' gallery: David and Nancy Nichols, from, interesting enough, the riding of Northumberland-Quinte West. But something more: Over the years, Mr. Nichols, of course, has been listed in Canada's business directory of Canada's Who's Who, a former president of DeLaval Canada and a former president of DeLaval North America, a very distinguished businessman from our area.

Mr. Frank Klees: I would like to welcome Mr. Dalton Hicks, who, among many other things, is a successful entrepreneur, the owner of Cardinal Golf Club and country club. He's here today to talk to us about golf. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. David Zimmer: I'd like to introduce three guests from Willowdale: Christina Yoo and her two nieces Katarina Yoo and Ariana Yoo.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Today we are very blessed to have many people who are served by our community health centres joining us in the Legislature. We've got representatives from the Anne Johnston Health Station in Toronto, the Rexdale Community Health Centre, the Youth Centre in Ajax, the Black Creek Community Health Centre and LAMP Community Health Centre. They're all here today to help celebrate Community Health Week, which starts next week.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further introductions?

I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of page Devon Jones and the MPP from Don Valley East, to welcome her mother, Cindy Ewins, her father, Terry Jones, her grandmother, Barbara Ewins, and her uncle, Fred Ewins. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, Ontario families are shocked to learn that hospitals have received legal advice to shred certain records before the public gets the right, in January, to ask for them. When did you learn that hospitals are looking to shred records to avoid embarrassing themselves and you?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: First of all, I thank the member for the question. I want to make very clear: We passed legislation to bring hospitals under freedom of information because we think the public has the right to know what's going on in our hospitals. I fully expect hospitals to abide not only by the letter of the law but the spirit of the law as well. The spirit of the law includes giving the public access to information, information that the public has in fact paid for. So I in no way condone this initiative or this recommendation from lawyers. I know hospitals are going to abide both by the spirit and the letter of the law.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The advice that has been given goes against any so-called attempts at transparency in this respect. Minister, you're supposed to be in charge. What exactly have you done with respect to this issue? Have you ordered the hospitals to stop following this advice and to immediately avoid any attempts at shredding of any hospital records?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What have we done? We have brought hospitals under freedom of information. This is a big step forward and a step that the party opposite, when they had the chance, refused to take. We do believe in transparency. We do think the public has the right to know. That's why we're bringing hospitals under freedom of information.

I said in the first question that hospitals will embrace the spirit and the letter of this law. I look forward to hospitals being under the kind of scrutiny that we think they should be under. We have a responsibility to our health care system. We think the public has a right to know, and that's why we've introduced this legislation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: You can't just hope that hospitals are going to follow this legislation; you actually have to do something to ensure that they do.

This is a very serious matter, and we're not the only ones saying this. Ann Cavoukian, Ontario's Information

and Privacy Commissioner, had this to say: "I was astounded at the language. Just using the word 'cleansing' is highly inappropriate. It suggests shredding, eliminating, hiding—getting rid of material before the end of the year."

Minister, you're supposed to be in charge. You're supposed to be about transparency. This suggests exactly the opposite. When did you first learn about this advice being given to hospitals? What investigations have you conducted into this? What determinations have you attempted to make to see whether any material has, in fact, been shredded to date?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I was very, very pleased yesterday that Tom Closson, the president of the Ontario Hospital Association, released a statement on this very issue. What he said was, "The first principle for the OHA and for the law firms that are actually assisting us in preparing hospitals for FIPPA—is that the spirit and the letter of FIPPA be adhered to at all times, period. To do otherwise would undermine public confidence in hospitals and our health care system."

I completely agree with Tom Closson.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Premier. At a time when Ontario families have to pay Michigan, New York and Quebec to take power off our hands, the hydro rates that Ontario families pay for their own power are going up again to pay for your expensive green energy experiments with Samsung and the like. Rates have gone up 150% since you took office. You can stop signing these unaffordable contracts that force Ontario families to pay 80 cents for five-cent power. Why won't you stop signing these unaffordable, expensive energy experiments that are driving up Ontario families' hydro bills?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm delighted to take the question from my honourable colleague. I'm not sure where his figures come from, but there are, from time to time, reliable figures that are made available to us. I would recommend to my honourable colleague the information produced yesterday by the Ontario Energy Board, which compares, on an apples-to-apples basis, a typical household bill, comparing May of last year to May of this year. It shows, by and large, that it's a wash. It shows, by and large, that the overall bill is not changing much at all, and that speaks to the fact that, for one thing, we've put in place a new clean energy benefit which is reducing the bill, overall, by 10% over the course of the next five years.

So I would recommend to my honourable colleague opposite that, rather than pulling those numbers out of the air, he actually make reference to the information produced yesterday by the Ontario Energy Board.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: If you think that Ontario families think their hydro bills were pleasing them last May, you'd be sorely mistaken.

Here's what the Ontario Energy Board actually says. Paul Crawford, an executive at the OEB, says that the

reason Ontario families are paying 150% more for hydro since you took office is that “electricity is costing more to produce. How we’re producing it and the types of generation we’re using are costing more.” He’s talking about your expensive energy experiments.

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You can do something here and now. You can stop signing these unaffordable contracts that drive up the cost of hydro bills for Ontario families. You can stop making Ontario families pay for generous subsidies to Samsung. Premier, they’re asking you: Why won’t you stop?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The Ontario Energy Board has confirmed that, indeed, the Ontario clean energy benefit is keeping prices flat for Ontario families. That’s good news for Ontario families, but it’s bad news for the opposition, because they can’t keep making it up anymore. Soon enough, Ontario families will indeed have to choose between the PC plan, which they’re afraid to show Ontario families, and our plan. A lot is at stake: a choice between dirty coal and cleaner air; a choice between a legacy of increased respiratory illnesses for future generations and a clean, healthy future for our kids; a choice between a neglected and failing energy infrastructure and a modern, upgraded energy infrastructure.

I am confident that Ontario families are going to see right through that party opposite. They’re going to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: When the Premier came to office, energy rates were 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour. They’re now as high as 10.7. Perhaps the Premier hasn’t seen a hydro bill lately.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Ministers. Member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Please continue.

Mr. John Yakabuski: If you think bills are the same this year as last, you would be the CEO of fantasyland. You’ve grown that much out of touch.

At a time when Ontario families pay millions of dollars to keep the lights on in New York and Quebec, here in Ontario, hydro bills are going through the roof because of your expensive energy experiments. You said that Ontario families would pay only 1% more per year because of your Green Energy Act. Then you conceded that it’s actually now up to 46% more. We always knew that you were not being straight with Ontarians. How much more will they have to pay to pay for your expensive energy experiments? How much more, Premier? Tell us, how much more?

Hon. Brad Duguid: As I said earlier, there’s no question—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Dufferin–Caledon should be in her seat. Member from Leeds.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: As I said earlier, there’s no question that the Ontario Energy Board’s regulated price plan released yesterday is bad news for the opposition, because they just can’t keep making it up anymore like they’re doing again today. The facts are now in, and the opposition can’t do that anymore.

The Ontario Energy Board released the regulated price plan yesterday, and it confirms what we’ve been saying for many months now: The Ontario clean energy benefit is having the intended effect of saving families money and keeping bills flat.

But if the member opposite doesn’t want to believe what I’m saying today, then let me quote directly from the Ontario Energy Board. They’re the province’s independent regulator. This is what they said: “A comparison of May 2010 and May 2011 shows overall the total bill has remained relatively flat as a result of the introduction of the Ontario clean”—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Ontarians are already feeling the hydro bill pinch, but it’s about to get even more painful. With so many Ontario families having trouble making ends meet, why is this government just sitting back and allowing hydro rates to go up another 3.8%, effective May 1?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I’m pleased to take the question, and I want to recommend to my honourable colleague the leader of the NDP the information provided by the Ontario Energy Board just yesterday. It is independent, it is articulate, it is authoritative and it stands out like a bright light in the context of a lot of misinformation that’s been kind of floating around out there.

It’s telling us that, year over year, Ontario electricity bills have basically flatlined. That’s what they’re telling us. It also confirms that the clean energy benefit that we have put in place, specifically designed to lend support to our families, our small businesses and our farmers, is having the intended effect. It’s taking 10% off the electricity bills and it’s making sure that, year over year, they’re paying about the same thing. We think that’s pretty good news.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Everywhere I travel across Ontario, I hear the same thing. At a seniors’ event in west Toronto just earlier this week, participants were telling me about their crushing bills. They simply cannot keep up with increase after increase.

How can the Premier allow this to continue? How can he and his government allow yet another hydro increase?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I think the problem for the leader of the third party is that the facts, as released by the Ontario Energy Board yesterday, are now getting in the way of her story. The Ontario Energy Board has confirmed that, when compared to last year, energy bills in Ontario

have stabilized and are flat as a result of our clean energy benefit. The NDP can try to spin and torque that report any way it wants, but the facts are the facts, and bills are now stable in the province of Ontario.

What Ontario families deserve to know, though, is where the NDP stands on the important energy choices that we need to make. We're for replacing dirty coal with clean energy. Is she with us or is she against us? We're for moving forward with North America-leading targets for conservation. Is she with us or is she against us? We're for making Ontario a global clean energy leader. Are the NDP with us—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This Premier and his minister can try to skirt around the issue, but the decisions he and his government have made are what are actually directly leading to the price increases in hydro. They are the ones who have blown more than \$1 billion on not-so-smart meters, and they're about to blow tens of billions of dollars more on nuclear expansion instead of on conservation.

How much more in increases can Ontarians expect because of this government's disastrous hydro policies?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Frankly, I think we've been giving the NDP a free ride on this issue for way too long. We've focused on the Tories' fear of sharing their energy plan with Ontario families and we've been letting the NDP off the hook.

We've noted that the Leader of the Opposition has been in his place for 660 days, and to date, he's still hiding his plan from Ontario families. But the leader of the NDP has been leader of her party now for 770 days, and this is all we know: She has opposed investments that we're making to improve our transmission system; she has opposed investments we're making to replace dirty coal with renewable energy; she has opposed investments we've made in conservation; she has opposed investments we're making in modernizing our energy system—and, judging by her question, she remains opposed to that. They appear to be opposed to everything and in favour of nothing.

Ontario families really deserve to know where—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I can tell you that I'm opposed to a government that cripples people with bills that they can't afford.

My question is to the Premier. Maybe the Premier's bubble prevents him from seeing what Ontarians are seeing. The cost of just about everything is going up. The latest consumer price index came out yesterday: In Ontario, prices rose by 3.6%. A significant portion of that increase can be attributed to rising energy prices.

How is the latest hydro rate increase going to make things any better for Ontarians?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I want to impress upon my honourable colleague that, in fact, bills have flatlined year over year. I recommend that she actually sit down and read the Ontario Energy Board report, which speaks to that specifically.

I think a really important question that we need to answer is, why is it that we are making such tremendous efforts to restore vitality to our electricity system? I want to remind you of what the IESO—that's the Independent Electricity System Operator—said back in 2002: There are "significant strains on the power system. A large amount of electricity is being imported, but we still face possible shortages. Unless there is an immediate drop in consumption, we may be required to take protective actions, which could include voltage reductions, or rotating cuts to supply without any additional notice."

That was the state of affairs we found ourselves in. Obviously, that was intolerable; it was unacceptable. We are working together with Ontarians to rebuild our electricity systems so we have all the power we need to power our schools and our homes—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier. Supplementary?

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Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier just doesn't get it. He's been trapped in his bubble for far too long. Meanwhile, Ontarians have reached their breaking point. They're being forced to shell out more for daily essentials like hydro while big corporations get hefty tax giveaways and public sector executives get fat salaries. How is it that, under this Premier's watch, things in Ontario have gotten so far out of whack?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We talked a little bit about where we were originally with respect to the lack of electricity capacity we had in the province. Let's take a look at where we've come.

This is what the IESO said in November of just last year: "Our short-term supply picture is very positive ... in fact, I can't recall it ever being this good. To date this year, Ontario has been self-sufficient in meeting its own needs even with demands ... that were higher than they had been in three years. We met those demands without the need for imports, a far cry from a few years ago when we were reliant on neighbours."

So we've gotten into a position now where we have a reliable electricity system. On top of that, we're cleaning up our air and we've created over 20,000 new jobs. If nothing else, I thought the leader of the NDP would be in support of those 20,000 new clean energy jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We need to restore some balance here. That means giving Ontario families a break with a permanent HST exemption on hydro and home heating. It also means ending the corporate tax giveaways and reining in bloated public sector salaries for executives. That's my plan—a plan that puts people and families first. Why does this Premier stick to a plan that puts them last?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: In addition to the fact that we've now stabilized electricity prices and the fact that we've introduced income tax cuts—\$355 for the average Ontario family—we are also delivering, I would argue, some of the best public education anywhere on the planet. We are delivering some of the best publicly funded, universally accessible health care anywhere in the world. We've got some of the strongest environmental protections anywhere in the world.

I would put our whole picture up against any other place in the world in terms of how far we've come together in our schools, in our health care and in environmental protection, and now we are exploiting great new opportunities when it comes to energy from renewables. I'm proud of the accomplishments that we've achieved on behalf of Ontario families, and we look forward to doing so much more.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is also to the Premier. There is something very wrong with a government that makes Ontario families pay 150% more to turn on their lights. What's even worse, you make them pay more when they don't turn on their lights. You say bills have flatlined? I opened mine and I flatlined.

Now your high-priced energy experiments are being exported to Michigan and New York and Quebec. Let's face it, Premier: Ontario families can't use power as fast as your expensive wind turbine experiments produce it. Because of the contracts you signed, some have estimated that Ontario families paid \$4 million in subsidies over 36 hours for power they never used. How much more did Ontario families pay in subsidies for families in Michigan, New York and Ontario to take that expensive power off your hands?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: As I said earlier, the report—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd remind the honourable members that your member just asked a question. I know he wants to hear an answer, and the moment the minister stood up, you started to interject. I would just ask that you would be considerate to your member from Thornhill.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I know the opposition don't want to hear this. I know the opposition don't want to hear what the Ontario Energy Board said yesterday, because it gets in the way of their story. But it's the facts, and Ontario families deserve to know the facts. They deserve to know what's happened to their energy bills year over year, from last May to this May.

This is not just what we're saying. This is what the Ontario Energy Board said yesterday, and I'm going to quote them directly: "A comparison of May 2010 and May 2011 shows overall the total bill has remained ... flat as a result of the introduction of the Ontario clean energy benefit."

I don't know why the opposition don't want to accept that. Actually, I do: It gets in the way of their story. I'm sorry if the facts get in the way of your story, but—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: The facts are that Premier McGuinty has made a mess of Ontario's energy system—and by the way, you paid \$1.4 million to ship that power out of the province.

Ontario families are paying more for the power they use: \$75 more this year, and the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters say it will go up \$732 more over the next five years. Ontario families pay more when they don't use power, and it's exported to our neighbours.

Ontario's manufacturers cannot afford to keep up with your expensive energy experiments and massive subsidies to Samsung. Many of them have closed their doors, taking about 300,000 jobs with them. I recently met with a heavy industry manufacturer, and they alluded to the fact that, as a 7/24 energy consumer, your high energy prices could be a make-or-break for them in Ontario.

Why can't you stop yourself from—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The Ontario Energy Board has confirmed that, indeed, our Ontario clean energy benefit is having the desired effect, which is: keeping prices flat for Ontario families. I know you don't want to believe that, I know you don't want to accept it, but that comes from the Ontario Energy Board. They're the independent regulator of energy prices in this province.

But soon enough, Ontario families will have to choose between their approach and our approach. Pretty soon, they're going to have to choose between dirty coal and cleaner air. Pretty soon, they're going to have to choose between a legacy of increased respiratory illness in the province of Ontario and a clean and healthy future for their kids. Pretty soon, they're going to have to choose between price uncertainty over there and moderated, stabilized prices here.

Pretty soon, they're going to have important choices to make. I'm confident they're going—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

STOCK EXCHANGE

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. We know that the London Stock Exchange wants to merge into the Toronto Stock Exchange—I should say that it's a takeover—and what's interesting is that your finance minister, at the beginning of this whole episode, was opposed. He was concerned that "it will lead to a loss of influence for Canada, and a loss of control over the country's capital markets." But recently, the minister seems to have changed his mind. He seems to be stuck on, does he have the authority and does your government have the authority to be able to stop this deal, if they so choose?

I remind you that you're the government of Ontario, and there's a bill that's called the Ontario Securities Act. It clearly says in section 16, "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make a regulation relating to any matter governed by Ontario securities law, despite any other provision of this act."

My question is, what happened on the road to Damascus? Why did he change his mind? And why do you think you don't have the authority?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: First of all, I want to thank the select committee of the Legislature for their outstanding work.

When news of the proposed deal first broke, what I said, very publicly, was that there were a number of serious questions that needed to be responded to. I'm pleased that the legislative committee, again, reinforced those challenges and came up with some very specific recommendations.

I would further add that I did not say yesterday that the cabinet did not have the authority; what I said was that we have had conflicting legal advice. A former chair of the Ontario Securities Commission says that cabinet does, in fact, have that. We have had conflicting advice.

What this government will do is continue to work to ensure the best interests of all Canadians as we move forward in a rapidly evolving world. I thank the committee for its work. It will form part of the body of evidence—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, it is clear that the government of Ontario has the authority, legislatively, to deal with it through the Ontario Securities Act.

I suggest the following has happened: The reason that the minister has decided to soften his approach on this whole issue is that it conflicts with the Open Ontario aspect of this government bringing forward this initiative. All that they're trying to do is to punt the ball from the provincial arena to the federal government, and let them take the ball.

I say to you, Minister: You're the Minister of Finance, you're the government in charge of the Ontario Securities Commission. The fact that you're trying to punt the ball off to the federal government says that you should not be the government of Ontario.

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Hon. Dwight Duncan: One government appointed a select committee to look at this matter: It was this government. One government has met with and has spoken with all the key stakeholders: It was this government. One government has raised serious questions about the deal that deserve an answer: It is this government. One government has given the public an opportunity to have a say in these matters: It was this government.

Now, if the member opposite is suggesting that Investment Canada doesn't have a role to play, I think he's crazy. Investment Canada has an important role—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. This is directed at all of you. I remind all members that, yes, I realize in the heat of debate, in the cut and thrust of debate, comments can get made, but far too often things get brought to a personal level. I would just ask all members to be cognizant of that, and I will ask the Minister of Finance to withdraw the comment.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I will withdraw and apologize to my colleague for that comment.

To conclude, he's misguided in his view that Investment Canada ought not to have a role to play in this. In fact, it is important legislation. It is one of a number of authorities that will be asked for their position. Ontario will make a full submission to Investment Canada. The Ontario Securities Commission will have something to say on the regulatory basket of issues, and this government will continue to protect the best interests of all Canadians.

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRES

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, community health centres play a very significant role in providing primary care and outreach services in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan. In many instances, the CHC provides services to hard-to-reach populations, including health-related services on an outreach basis to communities as far away as Shebandowan—60 miles away—for people who might not otherwise be able to get into Thunder Bay for regular primary care.

Minister, you know next week is Community Health Week, and we will recognize the importance that these centres play in Ontario's health care system. Can you please tell the House why health centres are an integral part of the health care system in many of Ontario's communities, especially those in rural and northern Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the great member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan for that question.

Community health centres are non-profit organizations. They're made up of teams. They've got doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners, counsellors, community workers and dietitians. They provide excellent care, and I'm delighted that we're joined today by so many people who benefit from the work of community health centres. They are now serving over 300,000 Ontarians across the province—101 centres and satellites, especially in northern, rural and underserved areas.

We have a duty to ensure that every Ontarian has access to the best possible health care, no matter where they live. That's why we have embarked on the largest-ever expansion of community health centres to provide even more care to more people.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Mauro: Many of the health services and programs at community health centres are based on community input and need. I'm aware of the great work done by my NorWest Community Health Centres under the

leadership of their executive director, Wendy Talbot. Many of the programs at her CHC directly respond to the needs of our community.

These community-based services are planned for by the local health integration network in collaboration with local community health centres in a way that fits the local need. It's unfortunate that the Leader of the Opposition continues to talk about dismantling LHINs because, apparently, Toronto knows best what's better for northern Ontario and Thunder Bay than the LHIN.

Can the minister explain how local health integration networks are involved in the planning and delivering of these community centres instead of recentralizing that decision-making back here in Toronto?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The local health integration networks, the LHINs, are responsible for funding, planning and integrating health care at the community level. This includes guiding the programs that the community health centres offer. The planning means that health care is responsive to the needs of the community. Ontario is a wonderfully diverse place. The needs in different communities are different, and the LHINs respond to that.

We know that healthy, strong communities are at the heart of a healthy, strong Ontario. I've had the privilege of visiting many community health centres across the province. Each one is different. Each one responds to the needs of the community. I look forward to continuing to support the remarkable work that goes on in community health centres.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, when you first announced the closure of the Sarnia jail in your budget, you said that it was because it was underutilized. In fact, that jail is actually at 105% capacity. Then you said that it made economic sense to close the Sarnia jail, but Sarnia is the only jail in the province that actually runs on a balanced budget. Now, the latest news is your scheme to ship prisoners to a super-jail in your riding at a cost of \$500,000 a year, according to the paper this morning.

Minister, when will you come clean and admit that the reason to ship those prisoners and jobs from Sarnia to Windsor is because of your seat-saver program?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock, because I've heard some comments from this side about this as well. We need to be conscious within this House of imputing motives and alleging that certain actions were taken in exchange for some sort of gain. I have to admit that I'm increasingly uncomfortable with this "seat-saver" comment that is being made. I'm going to ask members to refrain from using that term, because, in my mind, it is imputing a motive. I will be interjecting when that term is used.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member will know that the officials in the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services did an analysis of a number of institutions in the province to determine whether money could be saved by closing some of these institutions, just as your government closed, I think, about 25 institutions in the province. No doubt there were people on this side who would have opposed it at that time. I know what the role of the opposition is and I know the role of the member. But I can tell you that the decision was based on—

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: No, you were busy closing 28 hospitals. That's what you were doing. This is jails; it's not hospitals we're talking about now.

What I say to the member is that we took into consideration all of the information provided by ministry officials and acted—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Back to the Minister of Finance: When asked by the media and others why you were shutting down the Sarnia jail, you said the decision was made over three years ago. That was in the media this morning—the Toronto Sun. Your decision would make Sarnia the only major border community in Ontario without a jail. We know that your decision was made without consulting the RCMP, the OPP, the legal community, the judiciary, Mayor Bradley from Sarnia or the local police services. Did you at least speak to Canada Border Services to tell them that they would now be responsible for transferring prisoners nearly three hours away to the new super-jail? Or was this pork-barrelling patronage program too important to allow for community consultations?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Minister of Agriculture, that's not helpful. Comments from the member from Sarnia-Lambton are not helpful. Comments from the member from Cambridge aren't helpful. Comments from the Minister of Community Safety, leading off in other directions when answering a question, are not helpful.

I recognize that members are eagerly watching a calendar with 17 question periods left in it, and I would just say to all members that it is helpful to the proceedings within this House that we uphold the decorum that I know you are all able to demonstrate to the people of Ontario.

Minister of Community Safety?

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Hon. James J. Bradley: The decision was based on the information provided by the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services to those who had to make the final decisions. As you know, there were four different sites that would be closed, two of which were in government ridings and two in opposition ridings, so that wasn't a consideration.

I think that when the comment was made generally, we said that some of the buildings were very old build-

ings and some would be under capacity, and for others, it was because of the age of the building and whether there would have to be capital works undertaken at those particular buildings. They took into consideration all the costs and all the savings.

I know that in the first half of question period, people over there ask us to save money. When we find a way to save money, you say you don't want us to save money. You cannot have it both ways. It's a difficult decision, but you cannot have it both ways.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. In 2008, the McGuinty government announced the launch of cap-and-trade agreements. Cap-and-trade was supposed to be in place by 2010. Then it was delayed to 2012. Now the Minister of the Environment says that it won't even meet its 2012 target. Why has the Ontario government lost all sense of urgency on climate change?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my friend for the question. The McGuinty government is committed to cap-and-trade, and we are a proud partner in the western climate change initiative with the state of California, the province of British Columbia, the province of Manitoba and the province of Quebec. But it is important that, if we have cap-and-trade, we get it right, and we have to get it right for the environment and for our economy.

A cap-and-trade system means that we have to have robust data in regard to the emissions of carbon dioxide by our major emitters. I'm pleased to announce to the House that because of a regulation that was passed by this government, companies, for the first time, are reporting that data starting this month. That information will be coming in over the next few months. By next year, that information will be audited and verified. That will form the basis for us to make the appropriate allocations so that we can cap our emissions of carbon dioxide and reduce—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I would have thought the minister would have known that in 2008. The Premier once called climate change the defining challenge of our time. Now climate change has fallen off this government's agenda. Ontario's environment commissioner says, "Any delay in the implementation of a cap-and-trade regime will likely further hinder the government's ability to meet its 2020 greenhouse gas agreements." Is that why the government is almost six months late releasing its annual progress report on climate change—because it now has no hope whatsoever of meeting its 2012 and 2020 climate change targets?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I look forward eagerly to the release of our annual report in regard to climate change, and I can tell the member that we are well on our way to meeting all of our targets. I know that we're looking

forward to announcing our very first government-wide climate change adaptation report: the strategy and the plan that now will guide all of the efforts of our government and again lead in North America in regard to that.

I wonder why the member of the NDP is asking us about climate change when at every opportunity they block our efforts at energy conservation and at every opportunity they block our efforts as we reduce our reliance on dirty coal-fired generation. You can't have it both ways in this place. It's important for the NDP to come clean. You're either for energy conservation and cleaner sources of energy or you're not.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I have a question for the Minister of Energy. With Ontario's economy turning the corner, the NDP's energy plan, which involves massively increasing taxes on northern Ontario's employers, is something that recklessly puts tens of thousands of jobs at risk across the north. The government's long-term energy plan indicates that industrial electricity prices are expected to increase about 2.7% each year over 20 years. While electricity is certainly not the only commodity whose price is increasing around the world, northern Ontario's employers can use any advantage to stay competitive and to continue investing in good northern jobs. While the NDP plans to raise taxes on the north's employers, can those industries count on the government's continued support through its long-term energy plan?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I really want to thank the member for Algoma-Manitoulin for that question. He is indeed absolutely right: We're helping large employers in the north stay competitive through our northern industrial electricity rate program. That's taking 25% off their costs of power. That's very, very significant. Our industrial conservation initiative, which came into effect January 1—and incidentally was something that industry brought forward to us as a better way to do energy for industry in northern Ontario and across this province—is helping those companies cut their costs by millions and reinvest in their operations. Plain and simple, that's great news for workers in the north.

Let me give you an example. A recent RBC Capital Markets research memo noted, "The future of" Tembec's "newsprint mill is looking brighter with a change in Ontario's electricity rules...." Tembec's Kapuskasing operations involve 1,000 direct jobs that are benefiting from this—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: It's reassuring to know that our plan is working and that employers across the north are benefiting from this government's energy plan.

There is no doubt that in terms of energy policy and investment, northern Ontario has been given the attention it lacked. For example, the \$2.6-billion Lower Mattagami hydroelectric project has been the largest hydro project in

the north for many, many years. It will supply clean, green energy to the north and is a shining example of the government's commitment to northern investment and co-operation with First Nations.

Will the government commit to supporting this kind of investment and energy infrastructure renewal that create and sustain jobs in northern Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Without a doubt, this entire government is exceptionally proud of the progress we've made on the energy file in the north. The member mentioned the Lower Mattagami hydro project. That's just another great example of that.

I think the Lower Mattagami project is a great example of what we can achieve together, working with northern partners, First Nations, and having the fortitude to see these big clean energy projects through. We announced the conversions of the Thunder Bay coal generating station that's now going to be powered by natural gas, and Atikokan generating station, to be powered by biomass. Two of our major priority transmission lines, the east-west tie north of Lake Superior and the new line to Pickle Lake, are perfect examples of how our energy plan invests in the north's future by moving forward on investments—important infrastructure today that is creating jobs in the north, today and well into the future.

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Minister of Labour. As you know, prior to the last election, this House unanimously supported and passed presumptive legislation for professional firefighters. Last year, after constant questioning from the PC caucus, your previous minister finally agreed to add a regulation that now includes volunteer firefighters.

These firefighters are all employees of our municipalities. However, to this day, our own Ministry of Natural Resources forestry firefighters are not included in the presumptive legislation. When can we expect you to take the appropriate steps to make sure that our dedicated forestry firefighters are treated as equals?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Firefighters, including our volunteers, are indeed vital to our communities in doing what they do in life-threatening situations. We appreciate and respect all the work they do. Our government recognizes the very important, life-threatening work they do, and that's why we've made it easier for all firefighters, fire investigators and volunteer firefighters who suffer from fire-related illnesses to qualify for workplace insurance benefits with regard to presumption issues. We want to ensure that their families are treated fairly and receive the respect that they deserve during those times of personal crisis.

Our regulations now presume that eight types of cancer, as well as certain heart injuries, are included when suffering from work-related—otherwise proven. We can appreciate the work they do, and I'll continue to look into the matters as they proceed.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Minister, with us in the members' gallery today is Mrs. Kim Leblanc and her brother, Rowley Ramey. Mrs. Leblanc's husband passed away last October with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Tom had served this province for over 30 years as a forestry firefighter and, in fact, had fought forest fires all over North America on behalf of our Ministry of Natural Resources. Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma is a form of cancer and is included as a disease covered under the legislation.

Can you tell Kim today when she can expect the same benefits, as the widow of an Ontario MNR employee, as those families who have lost a loved one who was a firefighter with a municipality in Ontario? When can she be treated as an equal in this province?

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Hon. Charles Sousa: Let me express our deep sympathy to the family as it relates to the passing of your loved ones. Certainly, all of us in this House appreciate the tremendous work that our volunteers have done.

As I've mentioned, we've lifted the burden of proof off the backs of those hard-working firefighters and their families. While we've taken steps, we want to ensure that all firefighters and their families are treated with dignity and compassion in the event of these illnesses and, even worse, their deaths.

Our government values that work. We believe firefighters should be afforded this level of protection in our workplace safety and insurance system. Our system wants to treat all firefighters and their families fairly.

I'll undertake to speak with the families after this question period. Thank you for the question.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Ontario hospitals such as London Health Sciences Centre are receiving legal advice to shred anything that might be embarrassing to the government. The health minister claims to be alarmed, stating she doesn't "condone that approach at all" and expects hospitals "to embrace the spirit of the legislation." Will the Premier immediately order hospitals to cease shredding any documents?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I don't know what I can add to what I said earlier. This is completely unacceptable. The Ontario Hospital Association and the government of Ontario are in complete agreement that hospitals must comply with both the letter and the spirit of the law.

Bringing hospitals under freedom of information was, I think, a pretty bold move, a courageous move, on the part of government. We know that whenever we open organizations to freedom of information, we find things that might be embarrassing at the moment. However, it does result in better governance over time.

It was an important step we took. I am very pleased that the hospitals are embracing both the spirit and the letter. I cannot speak to legal advice that may or may not—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This government has no intention of ensuring transparency and accountability. Instead, they're more concerned with covering up potential scandals like the eHealth fiasco. The Premier can—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask the member to withdraw the comment she just made.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I withdraw.

Instead, they're more concerned with avoiding scandals like the eHealth fiasco. The Premier can claim shock at what's going on; the health minister can claim shock at what's going on. But the reality is that the government buried an amendment in the budget bill that blocks public access to freedom-of-information requests in hospitals. That's the bare fact. How can they expect hospitals to be transparent and accountable when it's clear that this government is prepared to do just about everything to prevent that from actually happening?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: With the greatest respect, that is just an absurd allegation. We are bringing hospitals under freedom of information. That's a big deal and a big change. The amendment that the member opposite speaks about is one that we carefully considered.

Our highest priority in our hospital sector now is improving quality of care. It is vitally important for the future of our health care system that quality in our hospitals continues to improve. Under our Excellent Care for All legislation, hospitals are now required to publicly report on quality indicators and quality improvement plans.

Part of the work of improving quality requires an open, frank discussion within a hospital about why quality is not as high as it could and should be. We listened to advice. We found a middle ground—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Jim Brownell: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. As this government knows, the forest industry is of crucial importance to the economic viability of northern Ontario. More than 260 communities throughout Ontario rely on the forest industry to sustain their economies.

This government continues to do everything it can to help revive this industry after it was hit so hard by the recession, most recently with the wood supply competition that was able to return jobs to the north, as well as some newly introduced legislation which proposes to modernize the forest tenure and pricing system.

Could the minister please explain why it is so important to modernize our system and how we have listened to what representatives from the north have had to say about the proposed legislation thus far?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I appreciate the question from the member. I know how important forestry is to his riding.

Certainly, our government is very conscious of the challenges facing the forestry sector, which is why we're so proud to bring forward a number of programs, providing hundreds of millions of dollars in support. But we also recognize how important it was to take a longer-term view of how we can revitalize the industry. We came forward with a modernization of our forest tenure system, the forest pricing and allocation process, and brought that forward to northerners.

In 2009, when we started this process, we thought we'd travel, and we travelled across the province—not just the north, but everywhere forestry was important. One hundred and sixteen consultations later, with community leaders, representatives of the forest industry as well as aboriginal communities, we drafted our legislation, which we brought forward to the House, bringing forward two new governance models: pilot local forest management corporations and enhanced shareholder sustainable forest licences, which industry is supporting. We look forward to the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Brownell: Minister, it sounds like tenure modernization will make the licensing of crown forests more efficient by opening them up to new business and generating fresh investment in Ontario's forestry industry.

Aside from the northern local input that you have received on the legislation, be it in the consultations throughout the north, the industry working group or the public hearings at committee, you structured the proposed legislation to nurture local input.

Could the minister please explain how he plans to continue including northerners in improving the forest tenure modernization and pricing system?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Indeed, we carried our consultation process all the way up through the public hearings that have taken place. We are now at clause-by-clause in the committee, and we have tabled some amendments that we know will address some of the concerns that have been expressed that we've been listening to, amendments related to the two pilot local forest management corporations. We want to set up an amendment that will ensure that there is a review before we move into more of those local forest management corporations. We also want to have an amendment that supports the holders of the enhanced shareholder SFLs, who use their wood in a consistent and an optimal manner. We recognize there are some concerns relating to providing ample notification and communication when we are reviewing a licensee's use of wood. Other amendments are coming forward.

The long and the short is, this is going to allow for far more local, regional and aboriginal participation in our forestry sector, something that everybody in this House has been calling for—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE FUNDING

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. In Oshawa, the University of Ontario Institute of Technology is attempting to split the facilities and IT departments, as of July 1, from Durham College. Minister, what would this mean to the staff and students at Durham College and UOIT?

Hon. John Milloy: We very much appreciate the good work that goes on between UOIT and Durham College, and we certainly appreciate the fact that UOIT has faced some financial challenges. The government has taken steps to help put UOIT on a solid financial footing by providing additional financial support towards repayment of UOIT's debentures.

Starting this year, the government will be providing UOIT with a new debenture grant totalling \$13.5 million annually. A condition of the debenture funding is that UOIT and Durham College reach a shared services agreement, as required by UOIT's legislation, and I want to assure the member that the government is working closely with both institutions to ensure an agreement is met.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Minister, the land that the college and university are situated on was originally owned by Durham College; it is now shared by both, as everyone would know. Many of the services, such as the athletic facilities, dorms, residences, libraries, cafeterias, parking and even the classrooms, are also jointly shared by Durham College and UOIT and mandated through legislation, as you mentioned.

What exactly would a split mean to the governance of UOIT and Durham College and to these facilities and the staff that are employed by them?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, I'm not sure if the member can take yes for an answer with this question. The simple fact is that UOIT needs to focus on education and not on debentures. I would remind members that the reason why they have a debenture is because of the plan that was put in place by the previous government, which was unworkable.

We've come to the table with \$13.5 million. We have also, under the legislation, asked UOIT and Durham College to reach a shared-services agreement. We are working very closely with both institutions to make sure that that is a reality.

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FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION
ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. There are some 5,000 children in Toronto attending French public schools. These schools are overcrowded, some are not permanent, and children are forced to travel great distances to attend. It is a right under section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms for qualified children to receive an education in their own language.

There is a high concentration of French-speaking families in my riding, among them the Cyrs. Their daughter is entering high school in the fall this year, but the family has no idea where that is going to be. The Premier has a duty to explain to the Cyr family and many others why the Ministry of Education has failed to guarantee the rights of French-speaking students.

Why is the government not stepping in so that the conseil scolaire can find a permanent home for them?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: En premier, j'aimerais féliciter tous ceux et celles qui gèrent nos écoles de langue française.

Some of the most significant improvement we've had in student achievement in the province of Ontario is found in our French-language schools. I want to thank the teachers, parents, students and all those who apply themselves to that important segment of our publicly funded education system here in Ontario.

I can say that we continue in discussions on the matter that my honourable colleague raised. We can also say that we have increased funding in our schools since 2003 by 63%. That's \$5,676 more per student. Again, on the matter of student achievement: It has gone up. Seventy-seven per cent of students in French-language boards are now achieving at or above the provincial standard in EQAO tests. That's the highest—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: It's hard for students to achieve when they don't have a school to go to.

We have communicated with the Conseil scolaire de district du Centre-Sud-Ouest and found out that they have been patiently waiting for assistance from the Ministry of Education for nearly 13 years. The French-language public school board is growing each year. This year, enrolment has increased by 7.3%.

The TDSB has surplus schools available. The ministry is stalling on its obligation to assist the conseil scolaire in securing permanent buildings to accommodate its growing student population.

Will the government make good on its commitment to the conseil scolaire and produce the financing that it so badly needs in order to purchase surplus schools from the Toronto District School Board? Yes or no?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We recognize that there are some geographical challenges that French-language schools have faced in helping their students succeed. For example, the 12 French-language school boards cover the same geographic area as the 60 English-language boards. That can present some real challenges. As I say, we are working with all of our boards.

I'd also recommend, of course, that our French-language boards reach out to their counterparts that would be found around the province and see what it is they can do by way of finding accommodation and working together to uphold the interests of the students.

Again, I want to commend our French-language schools for the remarkable progress they've made when it comes to student achievement. I want to remind my

honourable colleague that we have dramatically increased funding levels for our French-language schools, as we have for all of our schools, and we look forward to continuing to work with them.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Khalil Ramal: My question is for the Attorney General. Human trafficking is a reprehensible crime that preys on the most vulnerable members of our society. It robs its victims of their most basic rights: their freedom, dignity and self-esteem. There is no question that putting an end to human trafficking in our province should be a priority.

I was pleased to hear that our government is investing in many different organizations to support to fight the human trafficking in the province of Ontario. I was also pleased when I learned that the London Anti-Human Trafficking Coalition is receiving some funding to establish materials to fight human trafficking.

Minister, can you tell us and tell the people of Ontario what you are doing to help those organizations to continue the fight against human trafficking?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: My colleague from London-Fanshawe is absolutely right. We've had discussions about this before. The scourge of human trafficking appalls all Ontarians. It often preys on the most vulnerable, often on children. It is a modern form of slavery.

That's why this government—my colleague the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the Ministry of the Attorney General and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services—together are leading a coordinated, comprehensive government effort to add to the work we've done against gangs, to add to the work we've done in support of victims of crime—a special, focused, additional effort to support victims, to support the investigation, to support the prosecution and make sure we can put an end to the scourge of human trafficking in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I want to thank the minister for his effort to support many organizations and groups in the province of Ontario to fight human trafficking, because it's important for all of us in the province of Ontario. This initiative is important, and you have taken a great step in the right direction, but the most important thing is to continue to support the police services and community groups in the province of Ontario, to give them the ability and the support to continue their fight.

I think it is very important, too, to create a mechanism and also a coordinated and comprehensive approach to fight this movement in the province of Ontario. Minister, can you tell me and tell the people of Ontario and this House what you are going to do to put all these resources together and coordinate it in order to continue the fight and be successful in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Well, again, my colleague the member for London-Fanshawe is absolutely right. You need a coordinated and comprehensive effort.

Interjections.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: So to support the police investigative efforts and to support the excellent work that's being done in terms of the guns and gangs task force, to further support the specialized investigations unit, and especially the work of the Peel region police, who have been leading the way in many ways here, we also have a specialized crown.

Victims' services has been leading the way here, so a Hamilton area group—Timea Nagy, head of the group, a victim herself—Walk With Me, is receiving support through this initiative. It's just one of a number of ways we're supporting a comprehensive approach to end human trafficking, to support the victims of sexual slavery. We would wish that all parties in the House would support rather than make fun of—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The time for question period has ended.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Sarnia-Lambton has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services concerning the closure of the Sarnia jail. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to remind the members that the Ontario Allied Golf Association's golf awareness day reception is taking place today from 5 to 7 in the dining room. All members are cordially invited.

I also want to take this opportunity to welcome Carole Shurman, the wife of our colleague from Thornhill, and her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Norman Stoll of Montreal, who are visiting Queen's Park today. Welcome to the Legislature.

There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to be able to introduce some folks from Guelph. From the Ontario Co-operative Association, whose head office is located in Guelph: Peter Cameron, Jeremy Wittet and Denyse Guy. From Co-operators Insurance, which also has their head office located in Guelph: Frank Lowery. I'm very pleased to present the co-op representatives.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: First of all, Speaker, I appreciate your own hospitality today for welcoming a very special delegation from the National Defence University of Pakistan, who are touring not only Ottawa but Ontario. They are, of course, very ably accompanied by His

Excellency the Consul General of Pakistan, Sahebzada Khan.

With your permission, I'd like to introduce the entire delegation and ask them to please stand and be recognized: Commodore Khalid Saeed, Commodore Irfan Mahmood Khan, Brigadier Azhar Abbas, Brigadier Faiz Hamid, Brigadier Syed Qaiser Abbas Shah, Colonel Imran Munawar, Colonel Syed Waqar Hasnain, Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Shafiq Khan, Lieutenant Colonel Mukhtar Ahmed, Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Aleem Anwar, Lieutenant Colonel Kashif Nazir, Lieutenant Colonel Abdul Waheed, Lieutenant Colonel Shahid Nazir, Captain Ilyas ur Rehman Bhatti, Captain Mehboob Elahi Malik, Group Captain Abdul Moeed Khan, Mr. Arshad Ahmad, Mr. Abdul Akbar Sharifzada, Air Commodore Alester Mohan De Zoysa, who I understand is accompanying us from Sri Lanka, and also accompanied by Consul Asim Ali Khan, et aussi, finalement, Captain Laura Kissmann, the liaison from foreign affairs in Ottawa.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Consul General and guests, welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rick Johnson: I'd like to welcome some very special guests from Make-A-Wish Canada. Joining us today are Kristy Switzer, administrator in development; Whitney Gillen, communications coordinator; and Krista Bussey, manager of marketing and communications; plus two very important women in my life: my lovely wife, Terri, and my equally lovely daughter, Trish.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I would like to introduce Jeff Mole, who is the founder of Trillium Energy Alliance. Mr. Mole is actually working on a project to ensure that the citizens of Ontario can have community power. He hopes that all the members will make time to attend the Ontario Co-op reception this afternoon between 5 and 7 p.m. in committee room 228.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to draw to the attention of all members a notice of motion I tabled on April 13. It reads as follows: "That, in the opinion of this House, the standing orders should be amended to require that any private member's bill having been referred to a standing committee be considered by that committee and reported back to the House no later than 12 sessional days following its referral; and further, that any private member's bill ordered for third reading shall be called for third reading no later than 12 sessional days following the order."

My reason for putting this resolution forward is that politics and partisanship have reduced what is intended to be a meaningful opportunity for individual MPPs to bring forward legislation to a horse-trading exercise by House leaders at the end of a legislative session. Under the current practice, even though MPPs vote in favour of

private members' bills, they seldom see the light of day because the government refuses to schedule them for further consideration.

The proposed amendment would ensure that all private members' bills that pass second reading would be scheduled for committee hearings and would receive third reading votes.

The role of individual MPPs has been steadily eroded by successive governments of all political stripes. This is an opportunity to take back an important legislative responsibility that legislators have lost over time.

MAKE-A-WISH CANADA

Mr. Rick Johnson: Speaker, you may be aware that there is a cause for celebration on April 29. Across the pond, a certain young woman will marry a certain young prince. She'll become a princess and the whole world will smile upon her.

How many little girls dream of this real-life fairy tale? Once upon a time, this was even my own little girl's wish. So it's fitting that April 29 marks not only a royal wedding but a global celebration of wish-granting. For Make-A-Wish Canada and its chapters and affiliates around the world, April 29 is World Wish Day, a day meant to inspire people everywhere to share the power of a wish.

Make-A-Wish is an international wish-granting organization with affiliates in 36 countries. Make-A-Wish Canada was founded in 1983 and, since then, has granted over 3,900 wishes to Canadian children with life-threatening medical conditions.

Make-A-Wish Canada's success is due to the financial support of individuals, corporation grants and bequests and, of course, the dedication of its staff and volunteers.

I thank the party and House leaders for their support in wearing these lapel pins that we all have today as we formally recognize World Wish Day in the Ontario Legislature.

I offer this wish for my guests and everyone at Make-A-Wish Canada: May the hope, strength and joy that belongs in every child's eyes continue to drive the outstanding work that you do. With that, I remain wishfully yours.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise today to ask why the McGuinty government continues its practice of decimating small Ontario businesses.

Last month, I highlighted Ontario boat builders who are being shut out of the government procurement process. The McGuinty government's response was, "We are driving Ontario companies into the supply chain of multinational companies around the world." Well, the only place the McGuinty government is driving Ontario businesses is out of business.

Now we have another example that proves the point: the RFP process for small independent school bus operators. This is a flawed process and provides an inherent

advantage to large, multinational companies. The government's school bus transportation policy ignores the contributions that have been made for generations by independent, family-owned companies like Hammond Transportation and Bell's Transportation in my own riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka. These businesses have invested millions of dollars in our local communities, property and facilities and provided many local jobs, only to be shut out of the bidding process now because the McGuinty government is handing over the contracts to large, multinational companies.

This is a short-sighted approach that will eventually limit competition. Large, multinational companies may underbid in the short term, but when small and medium-sized businesses are put out of business by this government, they will be gone forever. Then where will rates go?

I call on the McGuinty government to put a hold on this new school bus procurement system before we lose all our fine independent—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

CO-OPERATIVES

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I would like to recognize the Ontario Co-operative Association, which is hosting their annual Queen's Park reception today to meet with members and discuss the important role that co-operatives play in our economy.

Co-ops are owned and operated by their members to build sustainable communities by fostering local economic development. There are currently 1,300 incorporated co-ops, credit unions and caisses populaires operating in 1,900 locations in 400 communities across Ontario, serving 1.4 million members. In terms of economic impact, the co-op sector in Ontario has more than \$30 billion in assets and employs more than 16,000 people. In Guelph alone, there are more than 40 co-operatives providing services such as housing and insurance, as well as dairy processors, credit unions and daycare.

This House passed a motion by the member from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale on December 14, 2006, supporting the co-operative model of business. On December 18, 2009, the United Nations proclaimed 2012 as the International Year of Co-operatives, and the sector is planning Ontario events for 2012.

Please join the co-op association this afternoon in room 228 and meet with them, and they can tell you more of their good-news story.

1510

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to welcome the co-operatives. I think they're a great inspiration for Ontario.

This past Sunday, residents of Bowmanville, in my riding of Durham, took part in the 12th annual MS Walk. I was invited but unfortunately unable to attend the MS Walk in Uxbridge.

The Bowmanville walk is a charity event which raises money and awareness to find a cure for multiple

sclerosis. MS damages the nerves in the brain and spinal cord, making it harder for the brain to effectively communicate with the rest of the body.

I want to recognize my constituent Bonnie Crawford, who promoted this year's walk. Bonnie is a remarkable individual who has lived with MS for over 25 years. Earlier this month, Bonnie and her husband, Darrell, with the help of the Bowmanville Zoo, paraded through the streets of Bowmanville with two camels, Titan and Felix, to help raise awareness of the event. I want to thank Michael Hackenberger from the Bowmanville Zoo for his support.

I also want to thank Durham MS society board members Elaine McDade, Mike Roche, David Reid, Jim Marsh, John Daley and Jennifer Heynen. Thanks also to Kevin Anyon and Mayor Adrian Foster for supporting the event that day.

Congratulations to last year's top individual fundraisers, Katharine McMurdo, Elizabeth Gilroy and Nicola Dunning, as well as team captain Laura Scott—that's not Laurie Scott—whose team, the MonSters, raised \$8,680. Captains of Bowmanville's top teams included Crystal Neilsen and Linda Vanderlinde.

As the honorary co-chair for the past number of years, I'm always proud to support and promote this event because it helps families who would otherwise go unattended to.

DUTY-FREE STORES

Mr. Howard Hampton: Businesses and the economy in Ontario towns that border the United States are hurting, and hurting badly. The depreciation of the American dollar has enticed Ontario consumers to shop across the border in the US and enticed American consumers to stay home. Add in the lower cost of gasoline in the United States and the punishing nature of the McGuinty Liberals' HST, and the problem has been made even worse.

But there is something the McGuinty government could do to try to help this situation. Earlier this week, the Ontario duty-free association was here—they have a number of stores located in Ontario communities along the US border. They pointed out that if they were given a somewhat better deal by the Ontario liquor control board, they could do something to help reverse this sorry situation, help sustain jobs in Ontario communities and increase the amount of shopping by both American consumers and Ontario consumers in these border communities.

All the government has to do is reduce from 50% to 30% the liquor control board markup on any liquor that is sold by these duty-free stores, and it would make a huge difference. I ask the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Last Saturday, April 16, I had the pleasure of attending the fifth annual Think Global, Act

Local: Greening our Community Forum in London along with my colleague Minister Chris Bentley.

The event featured more than 40 exhibitors who were set up throughout White Oaks Mall. Each of the exhibitors was there to showcase their energy conservation and sustainable development initiatives and share information with the people of London on what they can do to help the environmental issues concerning our city.

The event highlighted what local organizations are doing to respond to environmental concerns. Organizations gave out compact fluorescent light bulbs as well as low-flow bathroom kits to help people reduce their energy and water consumption.

In addition to the exhibitors, the event featured a talk on environmental issues by University of Western Ontario professor and Nobel Prize winner Dr. Gordon McBean. One of Canada's top climatologists, Dr. McBean has been a vocal advocate for whatever we need in order to conserve and protect our environment and also keep and preserve it for the next generation.

I would like to congratulate the event organizers for a job well done and encourage all Ontarians to think about what they can do in their own communities to reduce their environmental impact.

OTTAWA MUSLIM WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I want to take this opportunity today to recognize a very special organization, the Ottawa Muslim Women's Organization, which will be celebrating its 10th anniversary this year. The OMWO came into existence after the tragic events of 9/11. A lot of Muslim and non-Muslim ladies in Ottawa got together and wanted to make sure that they had an organization where women could foster positive interfaith relationships after the tragedy that took place in New York City.

That organization, in the last 10 years, has flourished. This year, on May 1, they will be hosting their 10th annual Festival of Friendship dinner. This dinner has become an annual tradition, attended by a lot of the members of Parliament, provincial Parliament, city councillors and other dignitaries, who come together with the broader community to foster peace and positive interfaith dialogue within the community.

This year, the guest speaker will be retired police chief Armand La Barge from York region. They've had many other notable speakers in the past, including former Governor General Adrienne Clarkson in 2004.

I want to congratulate all the volunteers within the organization, especially Nazira Tareen, who is the founder; Shano Bejkosalaj, the president; Shawana Durrani, the secretary; Ilham Abdo; and Nigar Islam for all the great work they do in our community.

PASSOVER

Mr. Mike Colle: I rise today in celebration of Passover, known to the Jewish community as Pesach. I've

asked a constituent of mine, Monty Mazin, who resides at the Reuben Cipin centre at Baycrest, to share with all Ontarians what Passover means to him. Monty Mazin is an extraordinary Ontarian who's known as the king of the kettles for all the money he raises for the Salvation Army every year in their kettle campaign. Monty has won many volunteer awards, including the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award. Here's Monty, in his own words:

"For me, personally, the meaning of Passover is liberation and freedom, and this was taught to me since childhood by a very wise grandmother, my bubbe Bessie, an Orthodox Jew and a social activist, who put her prayers into practice. She has been my role model throughout my lifetime of service as a community volunteer.

"Today, at the age of 84, as I sit at the Seder table and joyously celebrate with family and friends, I am reminded of the importance Passover places on conveying the story and meaning to the next generation.

"For it is the children's role to ask the four questions (written in the Haggadah), and it is our role as adults to impress upon them the significance of the answers. For we understand fully what our children do not: that the future of the Jewish people lies with them.

"In this way, each new generation can take its place in the chain of the Jewish people leading down from Exodus to the present."

The uniqueness of Passover is also encapsulated in the following passage: "In every generation, each person should feel as though he or she were redeemed from Egypt, and it is said: 'You shall tell your children on that day, "It is because of what the Lord did for me when I went free out of Egypt." For the Holy One redeemed not only our ancestors; he redeemed us with them.'"

I want to wish everyone a happy Passover. Chag Sameach to everyone.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

Mr. Rick Johnson: It has come to the attention of the members in this area that the member from Guelph is celebrating a birthday today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Yes, we all wish you a happy 29th birthday.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BRITISH HOME CHILD DAY ACT, 2011 LOI DE 2011 SUR LE JOUR DES PETITS IMMIGRÉS BRITANNIQUES

Mr. Brownell moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 185, An Act to proclaim British Home Child Day / Projet de loi 185, Loi proclamant le Jour des petits immigrants britanniques.

1520

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Jim Brownell: The British Home Child Day Act will set aside September 28 of each year to recognize and honour the contributions made to the province of Ontario by the more than 100,000 British home children who came from England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland to settle in Canada and here in Ontario from the orphanages and industrial schools of those countries. Between 1869 and 1939, they came here to work as domestics and farm labourers and certainly made valuable contributions to the social and economic fibre of Ontario.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item number 10 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members have heard the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding committee membership.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move that the following change be made to the membership of the following committee: on the Standing Committee on Estimates, Mr. Naqvi be added.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members have heard the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

JOUR DE LA TERRE

EARTH DAY

L'hon. John Wilkinson: Monsieur le Président, c'est ce vendredi le Jour de la Terre. Cette journée est consacrée au respect et à la préservation de notre planète.

C'est un moment idéal pour prendre conscience que nous sommes tous interconnectés, comme les maillons de la chaîne de la vie qui assure notre subsistance.

This Friday is Earth Day. Earth Day is about respecting and caring for our planet and our environment. It's about recognizing that we are all interconnected in this web of life that sustains and supports us.

This concept of sustainability must guide us if we want to ensure a healthy future for our children and our grandchildren. That's why our government has been actively working for the past seven years to protect and enhance our environment, to ensure our children and grandchildren continue to have clean air to breathe and access to an abundance of clean, safe drinking water, and to support healthy forests, ecosystems and the land our farmers cultivate to grow healthy foods.

I was at Allen Gardens Conservatory this morning to celebrate the second anniversary of the changes put in place to discontinue the sale and use of cosmetic pesticides, to make lawns and gardens, parks and schoolyards safer for our children. This change went into effect on Earth Day two years ago. It's already showing positive results. Water quality monitoring in 10 urban streams across Ontario shows that levels of three chemicals now banned for sale have decreased by almost 80%.

This Earth Day, we are taking another step forward. Some pesticides can be used on plants poisonous to human touch, such as poison ivy. Starting Friday, Earth Day, these products will no longer be readily accessible on store shelves but rather will be behind the counter. Customers can request them from a salesperson but will receive information on their allowable uses before being able to buy them.

Ontario is becoming a green and clean leader and protecting the health of our families.

Our internationally acclaimed greenbelt is protecting a swath of green space, farms and forests close in size to that of Prince Edward Island. We are protecting 250,000 square kilometres of our northern boreal forests. We've made significant progress on waste diversion by introducing new programs for used tires, waste electronics and household hazardous waste to go with the highly successful blue box program.

Our Lake Simcoe protection plan is setting the gold standard of sustainability in protecting and restoring the ecological health of Lake Simcoe and its watershed.

We are the only jurisdiction in North America to phase out dirty coal-fired electricity plants that pollute our air, contribute to greenhouse gases and harm children's, parents' and seniors' health.

Air quality is improving in Ontario. We are making Ontario a hub for clean renewable energy through our landmark Green Energy Act and creating 50,000 new jobs for Ontarians in the new low-carbon economy.

Under our Open Ontario plan, we are attracting new investment and developing opportunities for Ontario's businesses to thrive and succeed in tomorrow's clean, green marketplace. And in just over a decade, we have gone from having people get sick from their drinking

water to being the North American leader in providing safe drinking water. Our new forward-thinking Water Opportunities Act will foster growth in the growing water tech sector, helping develop and promote our water technology both at home and abroad, so that we can create good jobs here at home and so that our friends and partners throughout the world can deliver clean water to their people too.

Vendredi, lors du Jour de la Terre, j'encourage chacun à réfléchir à comment il peut faire la différence et à passer à l'action. Trouvez des raisons de laisser la voiture de côté, faites du vélo et économisez l'énergie et l'eau au quotidien. Cultivez des plantes indigènes dans votre jardin et utilisez des produits naturels. Plantez un arbre dans votre quartier. Les arbres nous protègent. Ils atténuent les effets du changement climatique et nettoient notre air.

Friday, on Earth Day, I encourage everyone to think about how they can make a difference and then act on it. Find reasons to drive less, bike more and use less energy and water in your daily lives. Tend your gardens using native plants and natural products. Get out in your community and plant a tree. Trees protect us, heal the climate and clean our air. Earlier today, the Minister of Natural Resources, along with Trees Ontario, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and a group of local schoolchildren, planted the eight-millionth tree under Ontario's 50 million tree program in Oak Ridges.

Cette planète est notre seule maison. Il faut en prendre soin demain, et chaque jour. Nos enfants et nos petits-enfants vont nous en remercier.

This Earth is our only home. Let's be good housekeepers, tomorrow and every day. Our children and grandchildren will thank us for it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Statement by ministries? The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: One of the main objectives of the McGuinty government has been to make health care in Ontario more accessible. That is because—

Hon. Gerry Phillips: This is not ministerial statements—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Am I not doing this?

Hon. Gerry Phillips: No, not yet.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I apologize. I'm told that I'm not speaking at the right time.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Speaker needs to know these things.

Statements by ministries? Responses? The member from Haldimand-Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: As environment critic for the official opposition, we welcome the opportunity to recognize Earth Week and Earth Day, as I did yesterday as well. Before I continue on the woeful record of this government, I'd like to first commend all who ensure that initiatives such as Earth Day are more than merely a feel-good public relations or media exercise—referring to those who roll up their sleeves and lend a hand. They provide action by planting trees, in addition to some

well-intentioned words. These are the people who really get it.

On that note, a few days ago I and my staff joined the Toronto-Dominion Bank's Simcoe branch in cleaning up Wellington Park in the town of Simcoe.

A question: Where are the 50 million trees Mr. McGuinty promised to plant? You've got about another 42 million to plant this spring. Environmental Commissioner Gord Miller called for a billion trees. The St. Williams tree nursery in my riding, since its inception, has put out a billion trees alone. That's just one tree nursery.

Over eight years this government has delivered eight pieces of environmental legislation, along with the associated costs with which business and industry are struggling to comply. There's a cumulative effect: It piles costs on top of costs, paperwork on top of paperwork—considerable red tape to suffocate those in business. I think of the duplication of the Toxics Reduction Act, the duplication of the aforementioned Pesticides Act, the draconian spills bill legislation—all stick, no carrot. Governments utilized each of these opportunities to grab the media.

1530

The truth is, eight successive environmental bills—it smothers economic activity, it's costly, and for all the cost, we see results that are lacklustre at best. For example, waste management, waste diversion: An issue prompted Mr. McGuinty's first attempt, with the Adams Mine Lake Act. I've yet to see that lake on a map anywhere. But there is evidence over eight years—certainly in the past year—that this government has lost control of that issue, a government that promised 60% waste diversion by 2008, originally by 2005. You failed. You divert something like 22%, and that's three years after your most recent target date.

Ontario Electronic Stewardship: You failed again. Taxpayers paid the full fare. The program has collected 2% of its promise.

Last Earth Day you promised new legislation, a waste diversion act. You promised that within four or five weeks; on Friday, it will be one year. Where's this legislation?

Of course, the eco fiasco: too costly, too unwieldy, underhanded; the irreparable damage to concepts you just talked about, like stewardship and diversion.

What about air? Constantly, we see environment minister after environment minister courting the media, talking tough on climate change despite pushing an ill-conceived cap-and-trade approach. Last week it was reported, "Ontario also signalled on Tuesday that it would not meet the January 1" western climate initiative "start-up date...." A further quote: "We are not ready to join the market in 2012." This was Minister Wilkinson. "We need the time to get it right and that means getting it right both for the environment and our economy." We do agree: Now is not the time for your cap-and-trade approach.

The same old story with the people across the way: It's talk, little substance. The minister opposite can't

open his mouth without uttering the phrase “dirty coal.” Last year, coal-generated electricity went up 29% over 2009. As they say, BS baffles brains.

Just to wrap up, I’d remind government—I’d remind all of the people across Ontario—to celebrate Earth Day. Remain steadfast in your actions. Consider Earth Day as every day of the year.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): In the course of the member’s response, there was a comment that he made that I do find unparliamentary and would just ask him to withdraw it, please.

Mr. Toby Barrett: It was probably “BS”—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, an unequivocal, sincere withdrawal.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I think I know the phrase you’re referring to. I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Responses?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It’s my honour to speak today, on behalf of the Ontario New Democratic Party, marking Earth Day. Speaker, as you’re well aware, as Earth Day has gone along over the decades, an event that started out as a very profound challenge to the way governments and corporations acted has more and more been co-opted, turned into a day for expression of good feelings and goodwill, and less and less for actually calling governments and corporations to account for what they’ve done, or not done, to the world around them.

The most critical issue that our generation faces is the question of climate change. I want to just quote from the Liberal government’s 2009 report on climate change action: “Climate change is not a future threat. It is changing our weather today, threatening our communities and quality of life. What we are only starting to witness is going to get worse if government, industry and citizens fail to act. Even under the most optimistic scenarios for tackling greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, the effects are expected to persist beyond the end of this century, affecting generations long into the future.”

This quote from the 2009 annual report by the McGuinty government on climate change is substantially accurate. I would quote the 2010 report, but none has been published. There is no report following that, no update on what has been done.

This morning the Minister of the Environment, who told me he looks forward to publication of that report, didn’t give a date for its publication. He claimed that Ontario is well on its way to meeting its targets. Without doubt, it will be interesting to see how he plans to do that, because, in the previous report, we were told that Ontario would fall short of its 2014 target by 30% unless substantial further action was taken.

You were here, Speaker, for the presentation of the budget. If you heard the words “climate change” in that budget, I would like you to stand up and correct me now. I searched that budget. I couldn’t find any reference to climate change and allocation of funds to improve Ontario’s actions on climate change.

Along with many others, I would be very interested to know what the McGuinty government is going to do to

avoid breaking another environmental promise; in this case, the promise of meeting its reduction targets for 2014. What is it going to do to avoid breaking that promise, that trust, with this generation and the ones to come, in actually taking substantial action on climate change?

In honour of Earth Day, I ask this government to provide its climate action report this week and present its proposals to actually make the targets it promised to meet.

COMMUNITY HEALTH WEEK

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allocated for each party to speak in recognition of Community Health Week.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed. Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: One of the main objectives of the McGuinty government has been to make health care in Ontario more accessible. That’s because we have a duty to ensure that the physical, geographical, cultural, social or language barriers that many Ontarians face in no way translate into a barrier into receiving high-quality health care.

One of the best ways to accomplish this is to bring health services as close to home as possible. That’s why we launched the largest expansion of community health centres in Ontario’s history: We’ve almost doubled the number of community health centres and satellites across this province.

In 2004, the McGuinty government invested in 10 new satellite CHCs across the province. We followed that in 2005 with an announcement of an additional \$74.6 million to create 22 new community health centres and 17 new satellite CHCs across the province. Overall, funding for Ontario’s community health centres has risen 80% since 2003. That means 318,000 Ontarians are now being served at the 101 centres and satellites across this province.

Next week, during Community Health Week, several centres will celebrate their grand openings right across Ontario. In fact, I’m getting a head start; tomorrow, I’m going to the opening of the new CHC in Trenton, where I’ll be joined by my colleagues the members from Prince Edward–Hastings and Northumberland–Quinte West.

Next week, I’ll be going to the opening of the new Chigamik Community Health Centre in Midland. This CHC will deliver care to people, including those from Christian Island, Midland, Penetanguishene, and it will specifically focus on serving First Nations, francophones, Inuit, Métis and aboriginal people.

Community health centres are a vital piece of our health care system. Teams of physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, counsellors, community workers and dietitians work tirelessly every day, as a team, to deliver primary health services and social services to individuals, families and communities.

Community health centres are critical in the more remote rural and northern regions of Ontario, parts of our

province where access to health services has been difficult for people in the past. And they are providing so much more than health care. They offer programs and services to address factors such as education, employment, income, social support and housing.

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I've had the honour of seeing many community health centres in action. I've seen the extraordinary impact that they have on the lives of the people they serve. I see this in my own riding of London North Centre at the Inter-Community Health Centre, and this past January, I had the pleasure of attending the opening of the Jane Street Hub here in Toronto. This remarkable centre is one of many hubs opening. They serve the needs of at-risk communities. In addition to health services, the Jane Street Hub has an employment resource centre, an early years centre, and community services like settlement services for new Ontarians. The Yorktown Child and Family Centre offers counselling for youth and parenting programs, and the North York Community House offers multilingual women's programming.

Not only is a community hub a great tool for improving health outcomes, but in my work developing the poverty reduction strategy, I learned of many other great benefits of a community hub. They help us to better coordinate services, taking a truly person-centred approach to service and program delivery. They can act as a great mobilizer for community energy. They're a place where people gather, interact and connect with one another and the services available in the community. They bring people and communities together.

I am enormously proud of the work that we have done with our health care partners and the work we continue to do to bring greater access to the individuals, families and communities that need it the most. That's why I'm very proud to celebrate Community Health Week, to celebrate the great improvements in access and quality of care that Ontario's community health centres provide Ontarians right across this great province.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am pleased to bring the attention of the House to Community Health Week, which will be taking place across the province next week in Ontario's community health centres, aboriginal health access centres and family health teams. Throughout the week, these centres will demonstrate how they are improving community health by delivering high-quality care to individuals, families and their communities.

This year's theme for Community Health Week is "Every One Matters." CHCs will hold events throughout the week that recognize that every individual, regardless of who they are or where they live, has the right to enjoy good health. The objective is to highlight that although the health of Ontarians is generally improving, not every Ontarian is experiencing these improvements.

The Association of Ontario Health Centres has recognized Ontario's great health divide as an urgent issue. A "health divide" refers to discrepancies in the health status of Ontarians. Many populations face geographic, linguistic, cultural or socioeconomic barriers to accessing

care. This leaves certain groups of Ontarians more vulnerable to illness than others. The following statistics from the Ontario community health centres' report evidence some of the inequities:

Ontarians who live in northern regions lose more years to premature death than the national average.

Francophones rate their overall health lower than the rest of Ontarians. They have a higher rate of heart disease and are less likely to visit a health care facility.

Immigrant women find it more difficult than Canadian-born women to access resources they need in order to stay healthy.

These are just a few facts that evidence a troubling reality. While the health of some people in Ontario improves, the health of others does not. Ontario's network of CHCs is mandated to focus on the social determinants of health: the social, economic, environmental and cultural factors that have an impact on our well-being.

Gaining access to a CHC is a great way for a community to improve its health care. Currently, over 400,000 people in 110 communities have access to a centre. Community health centres promote higher quality and greater efficiency of health care. They use a bottom-up approach that allows for greater local input into how health services are delivered in local communities. Boards are composed of community members who make decisions on how to tailor services to respond to the specific and pressing needs of their communities.

Community health centres are especially valuable in rural and northern Ontario. They break down barriers to good health that people experience in these regions by delivering care in remote and isolated communities.

CHCs tailor services to achieve best possible health outcomes for populations with high health care needs, such as seniors, youth and newcomers to Canada. Community health centres also serve people in Ontario with physical and mental limitations or disabilities.

The Vaughan Community Health Centre offers an example of one such program. This CHC runs a mindful eating and active learning program that offers type 2 diabetes education and self-management lessons for members of the Italian community experiencing mental health issues and type 2 diabetes.

Another excellent example is the Oshawa Community Health Centre, which serves constituents in my riding. Recently, the Oshawa CHC received the Durham Region Health Department Friend of Health Award. The award was received for the CHC's collaborative partnership with the Durham Region Health Department's oral health division. The Oshawa CHC is working to reduce oral health inequities within the community by offering oral health screening days and working toward implementing a permanent oral health program at the centre.

Focusing on health promotion helps people stay healthier for longer, delaying or preventing admission to facility-based care. This assists government in managing health care expenditures, especially in the face of an oncoming demographic of seniors within the baby boom population.

I would also note, in closing, that community health centres came into being under a Progressive Conservative government. It was the Conservative government under Premier Bill Davis that initiated experimental pilot programs. In 1982, it was PC Health Minister Larry Grossman who made community health centres a component of the province's mainstream health care system.

On behalf of the PC caucus, I would like to thank the entire team of professionals who work at community health centres for the excellent and valuable work they do in improving the health and well-being of all Ontarians.

Mr. Michael Prue: It is indeed my privilege, my pleasure and my honour to rise today and speak about community health centres. In my riding of Beaches–East York, the East End Community Health Centre provides primary care, health promotion and disease prevention services to the southeast quadrant of central Toronto. A unique aspect of its mandate is to reach out to people in our community who may have difficulty accessing health care due to factors such as language, culture, poverty or the lack of health insurance, which happens to all too many of them.

The East End CHC focuses on the whole person in its approach, and recognizes that factors such as income, education, relationships and housing play a role in physical and mental health. A satellite CHC has begun to operate in Crescent Town, serving the residents of that vibrant multicultural neighbourhood at Victoria Park and Danforth which the United Way has also said is one of Toronto's 13 neediest neighbourhoods.

There are 73 CHCs across the province and 10 aboriginal health access centres serving over 300,000 Ontarians. CHCs are unique, in that they serve people who experience barriers to accessing health care they need through a variety of factors.

CHCs go beyond clinical care, and pay attention to the social determinants of health, with an emphasis on keeping people well, not just patching them up when they become sick. Not only are there teams of nurses, doctors and nurse practitioners; there are outreach workers, health promoters, mental health and addiction workers, dietitians, social workers, and others, who work together to promote wellness in our communities.

I'm a boy from Regent Park, and it behooves me to talk about the Regent Park CHC as well. Health care providers there decided that it would be great if the next generation of providers to the health care centre were from Regent Park itself, and to that end they began the Pathways to Education program. In just a few years, gang memberships were reduced, teen pregnancies plummeted and high school completion rates doubled. In fact, today people going on to post-secondary education from the Regent Park area have reached the levels of many much more affluent communities. As well, many high school graduates became the first in their families to go on to post-secondary education.

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This is the kind of life-changing care that happens in CHCs across the province. CHCs serve our neighbours

who are newcomers, low-income, parts of minorities, racialized communities; in other words, those who are in the greatest need. Clients don't just get their surface conditions looked after and then they're out the door. They receive the kind of wraparound care that turns them into agents of change in their communities. When they get the care, they in return make sure that it goes back to others.

The role that CHCs play and their mission and mandates really mirror this year's Community Health Week's theme: Every One Matters. This highlights the message that everyone, no matter who they are or where they live, has the right to enjoy good health.

I'm very proud of all the work that the East End Community Health Centre does every day in my riding. I know I'm very proud as well of all the CHCs and what they accomplish across this province, because for every one of them, they are doing work that otherwise would not be done. In every single case, they are providing medical expertise which people might not otherwise get. In every single case, there is a multidisciplinary approach to make sure that the whole person is looked after. This is an idea whose time has definitely come. In my view, the money spent in CHCs is as wisely spent as in any other field of medicine or any other field of health in this entire province.

I commend the CHCs for the groundbreaking work. I ask that they continue to do this work and to push governments to make this the health care future for Ontario. All Ontarians deserve the kind of care that they can provide. Certainly, the care that they are providing in far northern communities among our First Nations people, among newcomers who are new to Canada, even those who have not yet filled the three months to have an OHIP card, is legendary. We salute them and, in fact, everyone does matter to them and to the people of Ontario.

PETITIONS

PHOTO IDENTIFICATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition signed by a group of very concerned seniors. It reads as follows and is addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas many seniors, visually impaired persons and other non-drivers do not need or are not eligible for a driver's licence; and

"Whereas many day-to-day transactions such as cashing of cheques; opening a new bank account at a financial institution; returning merchandise to a retail store; boarding a domestic flight; gaining admittance to bars, clubs and casinos; checking in at a hotel; obtaining a credit card, and even renting a video require government-issued photo identification; and

"Whereas Ontario's Photo Card Act, 2008, sets the legislative framework required to deliver a non-licence photo identification;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the province of Ontario develop a government-issued photo identification card and deliver, in 2011, an Ontario photo card identification for residents of the province over the age of 16 who cannot or choose not to drive.”

I support this petition, I'm pleased to affix my signature and to ask page Devon to bring it to the table for me.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Mrs. Julia Munro: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

“Breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

“Problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour; and

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners' Liability Act (2005) and to implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types.”

As I am in agreement, I have affixed my signature to give it to page Jimmy.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES SERVICES DIAGNOSTIQUES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have a petition here and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the Ontario government is making”—that's a misspell. Oh no, that's right—“positron emission tomography scanning ... a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients under conditions where PET scans have been proven to be clinically effective; and

“Whereas by October 2009, insured PET scans will be performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay;

« Attendu que d'ici octobre 2009, des TEP assurées seront effectuées à Ottawa, à London, à Toronto, à Hamilton ainsi qu'à Thunder Bay; et

“Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

« Attendu que la ville du Grand Sudbury est une plaque tournante pour la santé dans le Nord-Est, qui compte l'Hôpital régional de Sudbury et son programme régional de cancer, de même que l'École de médecine du Nord de l'Ontario;

« Nous, soussignés, demandons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario d'offrir de la TEP par le biais de l'Hôpital régional de Sudbury, donnant ainsi un accès équitable aux résidents du Nord-Est » de l'Ontario.

Je signe cette pétition.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas agriculture plays an important role in Ontario's economy, and strong, prosperous farms mean a strong, prosperous Ontario; and

“Whereas the establishment of a risk management program was the single most important action the provincial government could have done to help ensure the economic success of Ontario's non-supply-managed commodities; and

“Whereas agriculture is a federal and provincial responsibility, and yet the federal government has refused to act and come to the table with their support;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“We applaud the Ontario government's support of risk management programs and encourage the federal government to partner with the province and its farmers to support the risk management programs put in place by the province to bring much-needed stability, predictability and bankability to Ontario's agricultural sector.”

I will sign this one.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today from the Singh family—I believe, sheep farmers in the Peterborough area.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas agriculture plays an important role in Ontario's economy, and strong, prosperous farms mean a strong, prosperous Ontario; and

“Whereas the establishment of a risk management program was the single most important action the provincial government could have done to help ensure the economic success of Ontario's non-supply-managed commodities; and

“Whereas agriculture is a federal and provincial responsibility, and yet the federal government has refused to act and come to the table with their support;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“We applaud the Ontario government's support of risk management programs and encourage the federal government to partner with the province and its farmers to support the risk management programs put in place by the province to bring much-needed stability, predictability and bankability to Ontario's agricultural sector.”

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to the page.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John O'Toole: I have just been given these petitions from my riding of Durham. They were presented by Sherry Ibbotson, Doug Ibbotson, Beatrice Ibbotson and Jim Ibbotson. They're basically from Newcastle at Morgans Road. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the greenbelt;"—I should interrupt here. This is different than the previous ones I've been reading; it's updated.

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and a duty to protect the sensitive areas of the greenbelt and provincially sensitive wetlands;

"Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier governments to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permitting process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries;

"Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

"Therefore, we the undersigned"—I see the Minister of the Environment is listening—"ask the Minister of the Environment"—I'm doing it in person here—"to initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the greenbelt until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to protect our water and prevent contamination of the greenbelt, specifically at" 4148 Regional Road 2, Newcastle—they want to correct that legal description of the property—"and Lakeridge Road in Durham."

I'm pleased to sign and support it on behalf of many of my constituents and present it to Daniel, one of the pages on their second-last day.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

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"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I will send this to the table with Jia Jia.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John O'Toole: I just received this group of petitions, too—actually from my desk, but anyway. It reads as follows:

"Whereas industrial wind turbine developments have raised concerns among citizens over health, safety and property values;

"Whereas the Green Energy Act allows wind turbine developments to bypass meaningful public input and municipal approvals;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment"—who's here—"revise the Green Energy Act to allow full public input and municipal approvals on all industrial wind farm developments and that a moratorium on wind development be declared until an independent, epidemiological study is completed into the health and environmental impacts of industrial wind turbines" on people.

This is important. I sign it and present it to Jimmy, one of the pages here.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I just received a petition from Gordon Mather from 459 Arndon Avenue in the beautiful city of Peterborough.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

"Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada; and

"Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bio-artificial kidney;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bio-artificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States."

I agree with this, will affix my signature to it, and give it to the page.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas agriculture plays an important role in Ontario's economy, and strong, prosperous farms mean a strong, prosperous Ontario; and

"Whereas the establishment of a risk management program was the single most important action the provincial

government could have done to help ensure the economic success of Ontario's non-supply-managed commodities; and

"Whereas agriculture is a federal and provincial responsibility, and yet the federal government has refused to act and come to the table with their support;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We applaud the Ontario government's support of risk management programs and encourage the federal government to partner with the province and its farmers to support the risk management programs put in place by the province to bring much-needed stability, predictability and bankability to Ontario's agricultural sector."

I agree with this, so I will affix my signature.

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: This is petition day, that's for sure. This one here is also from my riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty is increasing taxes yet again"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the honourable member about the use of names.

Mr. John O'Toole: Premier McGuinty—that's the proper title. Former Premier? No.

Premier McGuinty "is increasing taxes yet again with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it;

"Whereas, by 2010, Dalton McGuinty's new tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy"—and use—"every day. A few examples include: coffee, newspapers and magazines; gas for the car, home heating oil and electricity; haircuts, dry cleaning and personal grooming"—physical fitness classes, golf—"home renovations and home services; veterinary care and pet care; legal services, the sale of resale homes, and funeral arrangements"—the list goes on;

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the honourable member about the use of names.

Mr. John O'Toole: I apologize.

I may have to start at the beginning. I'll start at the beginning.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No.

Mr. John O'Toole: Okay, I'll just start there.

"Whereas" Premier "McGuinty promised he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003 election. However, in 2004, he brought in" the dreaded "health tax, which costs upwards of \$600 to \$900 per individual. And now he is raising our taxes again;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That ... Dalton McGuinty ... wake up to Ontario's ... economic"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is there another petition?

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I do have another petition today, and it's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

"Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada;

"Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bio-artificial kidney;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bio-artificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States."

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and give to page Emma.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. John O'Toole: I have another one. This one here hasn't got any faulty language in it that I know of.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government is cutting front-line health care at pharmacies, which could mean higher prices, less service and even store closures for us;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Stop the cuts to front-line health care"—especially in our pharmacies—"now."

I'm pleased to present this on behalf of Yvonne Johnson, Jaclyn Smith, Victoria Kay, Jack Dubois, Don Dew—most of these people live in my riding and I want their names—Rachel Jagger, and Jeannine Closs from Bobcaygeon. I'm pleased to sign it and support it and present it to Kiruthika, one of the pages here. I finally got her name right.

OPPOSITION DAY

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the McGuinty government has failed to adequately consult northern Ontarians, their communities, industries and First Nations on issues of critical importance to the region's future. The decision not to hold public hearings on Bill 151 in the north and the same lack of consultation on the part of the McGuinty government, in co-operation with the Harper government, to impose the HST demonstrates a lack of respect for northern Ontario. We call on the McGuinty government to commit to a consultation process that ensures that decisions about northern Ontario are made in the north and not dictated by Queen's Park.

Addressed to the Premier.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 4.

Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Today, New Democrats, in this motion, are asking for something pretty basic. We're asking for all Ontario MPPs to commit to a consultation process so that decisions about northern Ontario are made in the north.

Why are we bringing this motion forward? We're bringing it forward because the McGuinty Liberals think that they know best and don't need to consult with the north when making decisions that affect the north.

The government's attitude towards the north is just plain wrong. Northern Ontario has natural wealth that makes it one of the leading regions in the entire world. It also has the talent and population to build a prosperous future. But the north will not succeed if the provincial government sticks to the same status quo that has been letting the north down for years: a status quo that says that the north has nothing to offer, as evidenced by this government's mismanaged policies and lack of consultation for the past eight years; a status quo that says that decisions about the north should be made in the back-rooms of Queen's Park instead of in northern Ontario; a status quo where the best hope for the young generation is to move elsewhere instead of staying in the north.

Wood and mineral resources can be used to create jobs and opportunity in northern Ontario. Resources should not be shipped away to be processed somewhere else, but that is precisely what has been happening in the north under this government's watch.

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The wealth that the north generates can stay in the north, so that it can be used to upgrade and build new hard and soft infrastructure, which is needed and will help the north to prosper. The green hydroelectricity that the north generates can become an economic advantage, not just a source of frustration every time northerners open their hydro bills.

We need a north where good jobs provide a good future for everyone. And for policies to work, we need to consult those who know best, which is northerners. Private enterprises will create jobs, but government has a key role to play in protecting and building the province we want. The McGuinty government has so far failed to protect and build the province we want. This government has definitely not put the people of this province, and especially northern Ontario, at the forefront of its plans.

The recession hit the north long before it hit the rest of this province—long before it hit the rest of Canada. Since the economic downturn started in northern Ontario, 40,000 people have lost their jobs. Over 30 mills have closed across the north during the recession. We're turning into a province with a small group of haves and many, many have-nots.

The difference between the very, very rich and the rest of us is growing at an alarming rate. By 3 p.m. on January 1, Canada's CEOs had already collected more in pay than the average person earns in an entire year. A smaller

and smaller handful of people are doing very, very well, but they're not the people in northern Ontario.

What's happened in the north isn't an accident. Northern Ontario is going down an all-too-familiar path right now with the government's change to the forest tenure regime. Bill 151, the Ontario Forest Tenure Modernization Act, is a bill that will have significant effect in the north. If this bill passes, not only will it fundamentally change the way we price crown timber in this province, but it will also change how we license our forests.

Any forest tenure policy that results in Ontario's publicly owned crown forests being sold off to the highest bidder outside Ontario and being used to sustain jobs there, rather than in northern Ontario, is simply bad policy. We've already seen this; we've seen it happen to mining. Xstrata and Inco shut down smelters in Ontario and shipped unprocessed ore out of the province.

Northern communities have asked for consultation on Bill 151—they've asked for it loud and clear—but this government refuses to bring these consultations to the north. Our member Gilles Bisson, who is a member of the committee, moved a motion to allow the committee to travel to the north. You would think the government would see this as a basic no-brainer. Here is a bill that affects the north, and it only makes sense that the committee hearings go to the north to see what northerners have to say about this bill. But the Liberals used their majority on the general government committee to quash the subcommittee decision to hold public hearings in the north and instead, as a replacement, hold two days of hearings in Toronto.

The subcommittee did the right thing, I would submit. The subcommittee knew what the right thing to do with this bill was, which was to take the hearings to northern Ontario where people could pore over the details at public hearings and make recommendations for change. Instead, this government quashed that decision of the subcommittee and used its power—its majority—to overturn what was the right decision; another decision being made at Queen's Park that will have severe consequences for the north without consultation with the north.

Bill 191, the Far North Act: Here is a bill that was only going to affect the Far North. You would think the government would take time to actually listen to communities in the Far North. No. What did they do? Instead, they pushed the bill through. Well, Speaker, you can imagine how the communities of the Far North felt about that.

First Nations leaders, mayors and reeves of many communities in the north, chambers of commerce and many, many others from the north told the government to put the brakes on the Far North planning act, put the brakes on that bill. Every voice in the north said loudly and clearly that they would not support the act. They said that the government had the bill wrong. And what did this government do? They ignored every single one of those voices. And of course, because of their majority, the bill passed, with the consequence being conflict.

Development won't happen in the north without First Nations at the table, and they won't come to the table if this bill, the government's Far North Act, is on it. Once again, decisions being made at Queen's Park mean lost opportunities for northern Ontario.

Between 2003 and 2011, the price of electricity in this province has effectively doubled. That's had a serious impact across all of Ontario, but it has been devastating to the north. In the late 1990s, Ontario's Conservative government, with the support of the McGuinty Liberals, decided to regulate and privatize Ontario's hydro system.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Deregulate.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Deregulate. Did I say regulate? They decided to deregulate and privatize Ontario's electricity system. They experimented, and that experiment failed. It failed miserably, and this government continues to experiment with private power.

A household in Kenora pays \$50 more a month for electricity than they would across the border—in fact, right next door, in Winnipeg. A large industrial operation pays \$1.1 million more a month for electricity. That's twice the amount that that same operation would pay in a province like Manitoba or Quebec. Northern Ontario has fallen victim to energy policies that are made somewhere else, and the results are higher bills in every single household, as well as companies that are being forced to relocate somewhere else where the hydro, the electricity, is more affordable.

The ultimate example of the government ignoring the north was the McGuinty government's decision, along with the Harper government in Ottawa, to slap a new and unfair tax on everyday necessities like gasoline, like home heating, like electricity. For northern families who are already struggling with significant job loss, with paycheques that are not keeping up—families who have to drive much, much further and have to heat their homes for much, much longer with a much harsher winter season, and generally have daily expenses that are higher than families in most other parts of the province—the HST is just like salt in a wound, and it's not creating any jobs. It's another decision that hits northern Ontario hard, and it's been made by people, both the McGuinty Liberals and the Harper Conservatives, who don't think about northern Ontario.

So what needs to be done? This government's policies have left the north losing jobs, losing people and losing opportunities. We need to create a new relationship of respect.

Due to the distance involved, it's a little harder to actually live in northern Ontario. It's a tough place to get through everyday life. It's harder to get to a doctor. It's harder to get to a specialist when you need one. It means there's a need for more investments in roads and bridges, for example. It means that daily essentials, like gas for the car or home heating, are much, much more expensive.

Under the McGuinty Liberals, the north has not been consulted about these kinds of issues that affect them every day. Bill 151, the Far North Act, wood reallocation

processes, the northern growth plan and the HST: They have not been consulted on any of these fronts. Instead of facilitating northern economic recovery, the government is making it harder and harder for the north to bounce back, and this government is doing all of that from their cozy little offices here at Queen's Park, without having the decency to go to the communities and ask them what is best.

1620

Every time I go to northern Ontario and the northern communities talking to northerners—whether it's in their coffee shops, their hockey arenas or community centres—every single time I go there, they are telling me that they feel that they have been ignored by this government, that they are sick and tired of a government that simply shunts them aside and develops policies down here in Toronto without consulting with them, without giving them the dignity and respect of saying, "We think you actually know something about what your communities need, about what can help your economy, about how to start pulling things to the positive, more, in northern Ontario."

They are frustrated with a government that has ignored them time and time again, that has closed its eyes to the great opportunity there; that has, in fact, stymied their opportunity, that has actually done things, made decisions and enacted legislation that does the opposite of what they want to see, that actually makes it harder for northerners to take advantage of the great wealth that they have. It's shameful that, after eight long years, the government still doesn't get it and is continuing on this same wrong path that doesn't listen to the voices of northern Ontario and refuses to consult with them in an appropriate way.

This motion is a very simple one, and I ask all members in this Legislature, all MPPs, to think long and hard about what the right thing to do is for northern Ontario, and that is to give them the respect they deserve. Northern Ontario has mineral wealth that's caught the world's attention, but it does not have its own government's attention. We need to give northerners the power to control their own destiny, and I urge members of this Legislature to support this motion and do exactly that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'm very glad to have an opportunity to participate in this debate, and certainly many of my northern colleagues will be, on this side of the House. I guess when you're in opposition you can certainly say what you want, even if it isn't true.

In terms of the consultation process, I look forward to having an opportunity to breaking down what consultation process has taken place, certainly with Bill 151—an extraordinary level; two levels of consultation—and the growth plan as well, which is truly a document that was designed by northerners for northerners—let alone the work we did on the Mining Act modernization.

But I just can't resist starting by saying that this is a motion, a resolution, that speaks about respect for north-

erners, yet this is the party, when they were in power, that stole \$60 million out of the northern Ontario heritage fund in their last year of office.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Excuse me. Did I hear the member say “stole”? Could you withdraw that, please?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I withdraw that. They themselves will acknowledge that they removed, under the cover of darkness, \$60 million from the northern Ontario heritage fund in their last year in office, and certainly did not in any way apologize to northerners for that. That certainly wasn't showing any real respect for northerners. It's something that we do talk about in the north a fair amount of the time.

Having said that, I think the important thing that certainly I want to address—and my colleagues all have various issues—is that we absolutely believe in consultation being a crucial element and that, indeed, northerners have got to play a very significant role in decisions, particularly in issues that are as important as the forest tenure modernization process, Bill 151. Indeed, it is a significant piece of legislation, which is why, when we first brought it down in August 2009, we recognized that there obviously were extraordinary challenges in the forestry sector.

Part of our response to that, certainly, was a number of support programs and incentives that have flowed about \$750 million to the forestry sector. But we also recognized there was a need for a longer-term look at it, which we felt could be assisted by looking at the forest tenure allocation and pricing system.

We began consultations in the fall of 2009, went to a number of northern communities—but may I say, more than northern communities, because forestry is not just in northern Ontario—brought forward a draft proposal in April 2010, and went right back out again and consulted extensively with a number of communities across the province. In fact, we had 116 tenure consultations in all; 45 in the northeast, 45 in the northwest, 15 other public sessions—63 meetings with aboriginal communities and organizations across Ontario. Certainly, I could go through all the communities that we went to.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Do it.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Well, I haven't got time, but there were 63; there were a lot of them.

The long and the short is that we were very keen to hear from northerners, and we certainly did hear from them. We heard from the forest sector. We heard from municipalities. We heard from First Nations. What we heard was that the legislation needed some adjustments. As a result of that, we brought forward public hearings. The public hearings and public committees took place, and we heard a great deal in the public hearings from northerners. We heard from northerners, and as a result of that, we're bringing forward amendments that we think will meet some of the concerns that are being addressed by industry. We've got support from St. Marys Paper; it's very true. We've got support from Tembec. To be fair, they'd want to see some amendments go forward

which we have brought forward to the committee, and we're happy to do so.

The bottom line for us has always been that we want to get this legislation right. We recognize that a significant change like this, which I think was long overdue—and, may I say, this is legislation and policy that we heard from the opposition was overdue as well. They recognized that we needed to look at the system. Yes, we want to protect existing industry, but we want to allow new entrants the opportunity to be able to come out with a good business plan and begin to use some of Ontario's crown fibre. So that's exactly what we've done.

Certainly, the consultation process has been extensive. We have continued to consult, and if we are successful in getting through clause-by-clause and through third reading, we will continue to be consulting with the forestry sector, with northern municipal leaders, with the chambers of commerce; something that I do well.

I'm probably running out of time or getting close, but let me reference the growth plan. The growth plan is a level of consultation unlike we've ever seen before. The member for Timmins—James Bay brought it up the other day in the House; the leader of the third party brought it up today. The fact is, to suggest for one second that northerners were not the architects of the northern Ontario growth plan is absolutely absurd. Some 2,400 northerners, more than 80 meetings, 300 submissions, 10 public meetings, 40 workshops, First Nations' extraordinary level of involvement—consultation for two and a half years. In fact, as some will recall, there were those who said, “Gee, why aren't you getting the growth plan out more quickly?” We wanted to get that right as well. As a result, we released the growth plan document by northerners, for northerners in March of this year. We've got some tremendous initiatives. We're moving forward with the implementation of the northern Ontario growth plan, a vision for northern Ontario for the next 25 years.

Let me just reference the Mining Act modernization as well. Prior to drafting the legislation, we went out and consulted, had public presentations all across northern Ontario. After the legislation was passed in September 2009, we've also continued to consult in terms of the regulatory process with our aboriginal partners, with communities, with the mining sectors, with all kinds of people across the north, recognizing just how important that is.

There's no doubt that we recognize that this is a piece of legislation that will have an impact in the forestry sector. It's one that we have asked northerners about in an extraordinarily consultative fashion, and we're going to continue to do so. We are grateful to have the kind of support that we have from industry. Although we recognize that there are still those who are expressing some concerns, the amendments that are being brought forward—and we hope you'll look at them closely; we hope you support them, in fact. We want to be able to make sure that this legislation is the right legislation.

Certainly, in terms of the amendments that are going forward, one of the things that we've heard most

frequently relates to the local forest management corporations. It's been misunderstood and consistently misinterpreted by the third party. These are two pilot projects. We want to be able to test the principles of a new tenure model. We recognize it will take time to test those principles. We're going to bring forward an amendment to provide some comfort, may I say, to industry that, in addition to the enhanced shareholder SFLs, which industry strongly supports—indeed, they've come up with the concept of that and wanted to help expand on the co-op model. We want to make sure that with the amendment we bring forward, the two pilot LFCs that we want to move forward on, we will not move forward with more of them until we have a full review—before we move ahead with further LFCs. That comfort appears to be required by industry. I understand that. As a northerner, I understand that, my colleagues understand that, so I am hoping against hope that the opposition will support that.

1630

The long and the short is that we have consulted in an extraordinarily expansive way. It is something that we consider very, very important, so to listen to a resolution such as the one that the leader spoke on, and I'm sure other members will speak on, is actually offensive to northerners. You're offending northerners; you're insulting them. They're the ones who have come forward with the recommendation for how we should move forward with that. They're the ones who told us we needed changes in how we look at our allocation and pricing and licensing system for the tenure system in the province of Ontario. They're the ones who have helped us, obviously, mould this legislation in a fashion that is going to bring forward a piece of legislation that will help revitalize the forestry sector in the years ahead.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to say a few words. We're very proud of the hard work that has been done. We would like to enlist the support of all three parties as we move forward to revitalize the forestry sector in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Oshawa.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I appreciate the opportunity to speak. The member from Kingston and the Islands may not realize that my father was born and raised in Sault Ste. Marie and has a lot of relatives in the Soo. As well, he spent a considerable amount of time as chief of police in Thunder Bay.

First of all, I very much appreciate the leader of the third party bringing this forward for debate. The real reason that it has happened is because of what has taken place with the forest tenure act, in that there was a request to take it on hearings throughout the north so that individuals in northern Ontario could express what the impact is going to be.

The minister spoke and gave some indication of the support that was there, yet as I look forward, the communities that were demanding consultations in the north—whether it's Timmins; Thunder Bay; Ignace; Cochrane; the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce; the

OFIA with Jamie Lim; Chief Angus Toulouse; Kenora; the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation; Grand Chief Stan Beardy asking for hearings to take place in the north; Espanola; Sioux Lookout; or Iroquois Falls. I know the mayor from Kapuskasing was in town as well and very much expressed to me the desire to have these move forward.

Part of it is the consultation process. One of the difficulties is—and I think what's taken place here, in trying to understand as a viewer watching what the reasoning behind it would be—all one has to do is look at what's taken place with the Far North Act. During consideration of the Far North Act, there was some consultation that took place and, quite frankly, there was a huge opposition to it. While in Sioux Lookout, I believe it was the chief from Cat Lake, if I remember correctly, who came forward right in committee—it's all in Hansard—and said, over the Far North Act, that he was willing to go to war over the legislation that was before it, simply expressing the fact that these individuals were not satisfied with the process.

You see, what had taken place in the past—when I spoke to Dave at NAN, the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation, they very specifically expressed that the information process in the past was not a consultation process; it was a briefing. These individuals were briefed as to what was going to happen and how it was going to unfold. It wasn't a matter of them coming forward and getting the opportunity to express concern about how it was going to impact. Essentially, what was taking place is that they were being told what was going to happen.

So myself and other committee members tried to move forward so that we could have committee hearings in the north to give these individuals direct ability in their communities, on behalf of their individuals, to show their communities that they're standing up and believing in what's happening taking place.

We need to look back on some of the other consultation processes that didn't happen. I mean, past performance is a future predictor. All one needs to look at is what took place in Attawapiskat. Think of the mine in Attawapiskat after De Beers, according to them, invested over \$900 million in that mine and, lo and behold, no consultation; the government just arbitrarily tripled the taxation rate at that mine. And right here in this building, on the very basement floor during the miners at Queen's Park day, the president of De Beers Canada stood up and said that this equated to something that could only be expected in a Third World country, something absolutely foreign that they had no idea would take place, and they stated the fact that these individuals would now deter them from investing in further mines in the province of Ontario, hence causing more problems.

Yes, the leader of the third party was absolutely right about Xstrata in Timmins and what has taken place there, with those individuals.

Quite frankly, the lifeblood of the north is the forestry and mining sector, as one would say that the lifeblood at one point would be the automotive sector in Oshawa. Those things are very dependent on those very things that happen.

Some of the things that have taken place that haven't been brought forward and that I want to enlighten some of the other individuals about as well are regarding, for example, the changes to forestry practice. First of all, it was quite shocking to those individuals in the north—and I have to say that when you were in northern Ontario, once upon a time, it didn't matter if you were standing in a hospital or a school or anywhere, in any aspect of government at all; it didn't matter if you were buying your driver's licence or your licence plates. If somebody looked at you and said, "Where do you work?" and you looked at them and said, "I work for the ministry," everybody knew at that particular time that you were working at MNR, the Ministry of Natural Resources. Yet, lo and behold, it's being brought down again with no consultation at all, moving the forestry file out of MNR over to Northern Development and Mines. The wondering is: Why would such an aspect take place? Is MNR not handling the file correctly? You only have to talk to the individuals in the north, and they're asking the same questions: Why is this taking place, and what is the sense in it?

When you deal with that as well, the forestry sector has changed its forest harvest planning. Once upon a time, moose management practices were implemented within the MNR, the ministry handling the forestry sector. Without any consultation, it's now being done under a caribou management plan. What that has done is infuriated the outfitters and the First Nations communities that I have spoken with, because now it has decreased the moose population, at the expense of or in the hope to allow an increase in the caribou population when they have no real, specific figures as to the number of caribou throughout the province of Ontario. This causes a lot of individuals—biologists in the north, individuals working in those sectors—great concern because, without consultation, the ministry has just done an arbitrary change with what they believe is the best interests of the north. Hence, once again, southern Ontario is telling the north how it's going to be good for them.

Lo and behold, we only have to look at the number of mills that are shut down in northern Ontario to see that it's just not working out. We need that consultation out there. When you get to the point in the Far North Act when individuals came forward and they protested and demonstrated the way they handled that—how does the government respond? "We're going to have consultations, but they're going to be right here at Queen's Park."

I think that if the government had listened to the people and gone forward with an honest consultation in a fashion where they could take input and bring forward changes, the municipalities in the north would be far more accepting of the things that are happening.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I want to speak to this motion because it speaks to the injustice that people across northern Ontario feel, and feel deeply.

I want to refer to just one aspect of it. There are literally dozens of communities across northern Ontario

that are dependent upon the forest sector for people's livelihoods. Whether it be a sawmill or an oriented strandboard mill or a paper mill or a pulp mill, they are all almost totally dependent upon access to the crown forest. That is where you get the wood fibre to run the sawmill, the OSB mill, the paper mill and the pulp mill. Imagine if someone sitting in an office in Toronto, with the stroke of a pen, says, "This large area of land where the wood fibre comes from: You can't have that anymore," and knowing that that's going to put 500 or 600 people out of work, 500 or 600 people who've had good jobs, who've been able to raise their family, who've paid their taxes, who have contributed to the community. But with the stroke of a pen in a backroom in Toronto, it's gone. Imagine if the people doing this don't even have the common decency to come to your community and talk to people, talk to the people who are going to lose their jobs, lose their livelihoods, lose their homes and, in some cases, lose their families. They don't even have the common decency to come and talk to you. They do it in the backroom with the stroke of a pen. I think that just about everybody across Ontario, if they had this happen to them, would be angry, would be upset. But this hasn't happened just once; this has happened repeatedly over the last six or seven months under this government.

1640

I just read today in the Globe and Mail Report on Business that the oriented strand board market is improving, that oriented strand board mills that have been shut down for a year, two years are now reopening. But there's an oriented strand board mill in Wawa—a relatively modern oriented strand board mill in Wawa—and the community of Wawa is very dependent upon it for employment. This government took away their wood supply allocation with the stroke of a pen and didn't have the decency to go to Wawa and look the people in the eye and say to them, "We're taking your jobs. We're taking away your economic viability. We're taking away an economic base of your community." They didn't even have the decency to go and talk to people.

Or Dubreuilville, a community that is almost totally based on sawmilling: This government went into the backroom and, with the stroke of a pen, took away their wood supply allocation. They didn't even have the decency to go to the community and say, "Sorry, we took away your jobs. Sorry, we took away your economic future. Sorry, we took away the economic base of your community."

Or McKenzie Forest Products in Sioux Lookout: That sawmill is a rather unique place, because there are a lot of First Nations people who work at that sawmill. Imagine 600 good jobs. This government, with the stroke of a pen, says, "We're taking away your wood supply allocation." They didn't even have the decency to go to the community and talk to people. They didn't even have the decency to go to them and say, "What effect is this going to have on your life? What effect is this going to have on your future? What effect is this going to have on your community?" No consultation, no consideration

whatsoever. With the stroke of a pen, just do away with it.

Then this government has the audacity, the arrogance, to say that it's consulting people in northern Ontario. I've heard of bait and switch. I've heard of double-talk before. But what I've witnessed in the last six or eight months from this government, in terms of its dismissal of the people of northern Ontario, the communities of northern Ontario, the workers of northern Ontario and the First Nations of northern Ontario, is something I have never seen before in my experience in public life.

I couldn't believe it when I heard the Minister of Natural Resources stand in this House and say that she had consulted First Nations about the Far North Act, when we had dozens of representatives of First Nations here in the gallery who said over and over every day, "We have not been consulted. The minister flew into our community, spent half an hour, did the photo op and then left." That is not consultation. I can think of a number of things I would call it—a whistle stop, a superficial media strategy—but it is not consultation, and that is something this government has got to realize.

I have never in my life seen the kind of anger that I see in northern Ontario communities today. I have never seen people so upset about a government that believes it is okay to go into the backroom in Toronto and write regulations and laws that affect people's lives, their jobs, their livelihoods and the future of their communities with no consultation and no respect for those communities or those people. But that is what people across the north have been subjected to by this government over and over again. That is why this motion is here today, and that is why I urge all members to vote for this motion. Vote for it before you create a situation that all of us—all of us—would find intolerable.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate? The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased today to welcome my son Christian Mauro to the Legislature here, sitting in the east members' gallery. He's down here to watch democracy in action.

I guess the first thing I'll say in regards to this opposition day motion, to the people in northern Ontario: So the campaign has begun. Clearly, if there has ever been an opposition day motion that was clearly and 100% focused on starting a political campaign—and that starts this fall. We're ready. They're ready. This is what they bring forward. The campaign has begun.

Thankfully, every day in my experience in northern Ontario there are fewer and fewer people who are buying into this rhetoric. It hasn't changed for six or seven years. It is exactly the same kind of rhetoric that's been coming from that party for seven years. Nothing's changed. If there was ever an opposition day motion that was more patently, obviously shallow and political than this one, I haven't seen it, and I've been here seven and a half years now. I'm still waiting to see it.

The issue here today—I'll get to the consultation part in a second—is the legislation. As the Minister of North-

ern Development, Mines and Forestry already said, our government has, coming forward to committee, amendments to this particular legislation. We'll be watching closely to see if the NDP members in fact do support the amendments that are coming forward.

I know the minister has work very hard on this particular piece. The issue is the legislation, not this ridiculous argument that's being made about the consultation. If there was ever a government that raised the bar when it came to consulting on just about any piece of legislation, I would say that this government has moved the yardsticks forward and raised the bar, as compared to any other one at any other time. But, of course, they don't want to talk about that. So we'll be watching closely to see if they vote for our amendments and whether, at the end of the day, this closely reflects what the people in the province are looking for.

They want to talk about consulting, and the member from Kenora–Rainy River, who just spoke, said he's never seen people in northern Ontario this mad, he's never seen them this up in arms, he's never seen so many backroom deals, and, with the stroke of a pen, anything being done in southern Ontario that affects people—you know what? You know what jumped into my mind? The social contract. Have you ever seen a piece of legislation more egregious, more of an affront to what would be considered to be your core constituency, like it was for the NDP? Have you ever seen anything more egregious? Basic collective, freely bargained—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order.

Mr. Bill Mauro: The members opposite are laughing. They think it's funny.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Stop the clock, please. Can we take it down a notch and listen to the member? Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Bill Mauro: They think it's funny. They're laughing over there. But there are people in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan who still talk about the social contract. I'll tell you when people were mad: when that piece of legislation was brought in here. You want to talk about a backroom deal? You want to talk about "with the stroke of a pen"? We'll go back and check the Hansard from the early 1990s to see how many of these members were on their feet speaking out against the social contract. That's what we'll do. We'll see if we can find them in Hansard telling the people in northern Ontario what a bad idea they thought the social contract was.

Did they consult with northern Ontario people when they took \$60 million out of the northern Ontario heritage fund, during what were difficult times, I acknowledge, but not as difficult as the times we have now? What did we do? They took \$60 million out. We took the \$60 million and we made it \$100 million. We took a slightly different approach.

What did they do with medical school spaces? Who did they consult with when they decided to slash medical

school enrolments all across the province, which led to more people in this province not being able to find a primary care provider for the longest period of time? Who did they consult with when it came to those kinds of decisions? What a bunch of nonsense.

They still want to try and blame the forestry crisis on this government. Speaker, I wish I had an hour to speak today, but as you can imagine, northerners are clamouring over each other to try to speak.

Who did you consult with when the Abitibi Thunder Bay mill division closed in 1991 and put 450 people permanently out of work—450 people? I just flew down this week with a guy who used to work there, and I'll tell you, he had a very interesting idea and commentary on what the NDP did or didn't do in 1991 when it came to him, as one of those 450 people who lost their jobs at the Abitibi Thunder Bay mill in 1991.

But, of course, they'll tell you that every lost forestry job is the fault of this government. What an absolute bunch of nonsense. We don't have time today to get into as much detail as we would like to, but I wish I had more.

1650

I want to talk to you about this oddly worded resolution that somehow throws this bit in here about the HST. I want to just talk about that a little bit. I've said before here in this Legislature that at the federal level, the Bloc, the Liberals and the Conservatives supported the HST. At the provincial level—I apologize to my Conservative friends; you don't have any credibility on this matter—the only people really opposing it are the third party, the NDP. They're the only ones who are opposing it, federally and provincially. They're the only ones. They get it. The rest of us don't get it; just the NDP get it.

I want to read something that was in the Toronto Star not too long ago. The headline says this: "Layton Sees HST Differently in the East and the West." I want to read this for you:

"NDP Leader Jack Layton is singing a different tune on the HST at opposite ends of the country, saying it's bad in British Columbia because the Liberal government introduced it while saying it's progressive in Nova Scotia where the NDP is in power." This is Jack Layton.

"Layton is desperately hoping to tap into the anger in BC over the introduction of the blended sales tax....

"Here in British Columbia the Premier ... promised not to bring" it in, and then he took a bribe from the federal Conservative government. That's what Layton is saying in BC.

Here's where it even gets funnier: "Layton says not only should the HST be scrapped in BC but the province should also be able to keep the federal money as well." He's saying to scrap it and let them keep the federal money as well.

"Yet earlier in the campaign in Halifax, Layton remarked on NDP Premier Darrell Dexter's innovative approach to the 15% HST there when the government removed it from home heating."

Here's what he said: "The thing about what happened here was, under Darrell Dexter"—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Stop the clock, please. I would remind the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek to return to his seat.

Continue.

Mr. Bill Mauro: "The thing about what happened here was, under Darrell Dexter"—the NDP Premier in Nova Scotia—"there was a whole program of rebates and specific reductions to the HST, so that for many people, especially those most in need, they actually ended up ahead of the game."

It sounds a little bit familiar—like what's gone on here in Ontario, I would say. It sounds close to what has happened here in Ontario. It is remarkable.

As I said, this is actually a bit of fun. The NDP have brought forward a motion that is intentioned—I think we're probably seeing at least 30% to 50% of what will be their campaign: HST and electricity. I don't know what else they're bringing forward. They haven't told us their electricity plan yet. I don't know what they're going to pay for or what they support. They don't support nuclear; they don't support our green energy program—

Mr. David Orazietti: They don't support coal.

Mr. Bill Mauro: They don't support coal. I don't know what it is that they support when it comes to their energy or how they're going to pay for it. I haven't yet heard them explain to me how energy prices went up by 40% in the five years they were in power and yet, we got no new generation or transmission infrastructure while they were there—but a 40% increase over five years.

The campaign has started; that's all this is about. We welcome it. We look forward to it and we look forward to the people of northern Ontario having an opportunity, in the days and months ahead, to really stand and look closely and analyze the rhetoric that has been coming from this party for the last six or seven years, because absolutely nothing has changed.

I'm excited about the opportunity to dissect and to debate those members as we move forward. As I said, I wish I had more time. We have two other northern members clamouring here to speak on this. I thank you for my time. I'm happy my son was here to see this with us today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's too bad that the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan allowed himself to be subbed in at general government. We didn't hear him on the record at that committee.

I'm pleased to speak to the opposition day motion by the third party. There are a number of things in this motion that I certainly agree with, and there are some that I don't, and I'll get to those after. But I was a member of the general government committee, with the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, when we discussed this item.

I'll turn to the March 30 Hansard for that committee. Originally, the subcommittee came and proposed that there would be some consultation in the north—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Could you stop the clock for a second, please? I would ask that the government side now come to order to listen to the other side. Thank you.

Continue, please.

Mr. Steve Clark: The original subcommittee report did talk about northern hearings. In fact, the report, as listed in Hansard, talks about the committee going to Pembroke, Timmins, Thunder Bay—the fact that clause-by-clause wouldn't be on May 2. However, the parliamentary assistant, the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, moved a motion to take out those northern days. In fact, when we pressed him about the fact that he would take those out and we wouldn't have northern hearings, he made some interesting comments. Those were comments in committee where they decided that we'd just have the two days in Toronto, and he made comments. It was interesting because he said—and I'll quote the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, Mr. Brown, saying:

"We are about to hear, hopefully, two full days of public presentations to us. People can do this. This is 2011. Hopefully, we can do some of these things by audiovisual means, some of them perhaps just by audio. Many will want to come here. Many of the companies that are involved here are not unacquainted with the city of Toronto and the environs. These are very large companies."

So, when he was pressed, because I asked him whether he thought there was enough consultation, he said, "I've said what I needed to say. We need to move on. Northerners have had ample opportunity to comment on this."

However, when he gets back home, the Mid-North Monitor—I'll give you another quote, Madam Speaker. This is Mr. Brown, the member for Algoma-Manitoulin: "I don't want to see consultations in the cities, that is what I said, because that is not where the people directly affected by this legislation live," explained Brown. "I want to see the hearings go to the communities directly affected by this legislation, places like Espanola."

Well, you know what? He didn't move that they go to Espanola. There was no motion at the committee to go to Espanola or any of those other communities. So I don't know if the member is going to stand up and give as a third story today or what he's going to do.

But I'll tell you, the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington and I in committee had lots of support for the third party. Mr. Bisson, the member for Timmins-James Bay, placed a motion expressing the third party's discontent with Bill 151. The motion: three in favour, Mr. Bisson, Mr. Hillier and myself. The five Liberals voted against it.

I have an issue that day because the member for Timmins-James Bay said that there would be a similar motion for opposition day. This motion that we supported is not the same motion that you've presented. It's not the same one. However, Mr. Bisson, the member for Timmins-James Bay, also presented a motion basically

saying that we would adjourn our meetings—in fact, I'll read it. He said, "I move that the Standing Committee on General Government immediately adjourn clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 151, the Ontario Forest Tenure Modernization Act, 2011, and convene a meeting of the subcommittee for the purpose of scheduling public hearings in northern Ontario for input on the original draft of Bill 151 and the government amendments as tabled."

Three in favour, the two Conservatives and the New Democrat; all the Liberals voted against it. The reason we did that is because the people who came to the hearings—it was obvious, and Mr. Bisson, Mr. Hillier and I heard it, that some people knew the amendments; others did not—some of the municipalities. People who asked for public hearings: We asked them, and they weren't aware of the amendments. So we joined with the third party. We supported Mr. Bisson on that motion, and it was lost. Again, in the end, because of the short time, there was another motion that all members supported, putting this on the shelf until May 4 for clause-by-clause.

You know what we did after that? Mr. Hillier is now in the north. He left after Monday's hearing, and he has been in the north. He's been in Sault Ste. Marie and Thunder Bay. Our leader, Tim Hudak, has been in North Bay, Sudbury and Thunder Bay. That's where Progressive Conservatives decided to go after Monday's meeting, after the five motions that government put forward.

So we've put our money where our mouth is. We've supported what you've said, and our member now is up north consulting about those amendments.

However, as I said, this isn't the same motion that we supported in committee, that the Progressive Conservatives supported. There are two commas and six words—I'm not happy with this wedge that they put in the motion, because they talk about the federal government. I thought you guys were better than that. That's exactly what the Libs would do. They would try to drive that wedge.

We supported you in committee. We supported you. We were right there beside you. Now you end up putting that federal-government reference in about the HST. When we brought up the HST, you'd stand up and rhyme off all the federal Conservative politicians—you'd always deflect and deny when we talked about our opposition. But do you know what? That motion—those six words and those two commas—you're letting the Liberals off the hook. It's their decision on the HST. They were the architects of the HST, and now you're no better than they are by doing that.

1700

You're doing it for one reason: for us not to support the motion. Well, do you know what? With those two commas and six words mentioning the federal Conservatives, you've accomplished it, because I'm not supportive of that motion. I was supportive of your motions in committee. I was supportive of having consultations in the north. Our critic, the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, is in the north consulting on Bill

151. He's doing what these members opposite and the parliamentary assistant opposite haven't done since those amendments were tabled, and that's to go to the north and talk to northern Ontarians.

I'm very disappointed with that wedge. I'm very disappointed. I felt you were better than that. So we're not going to support the motion as presently written. Shame on you for including those six words. Again, it's not right.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to add my perspective, from the view of the people of Nickel Belt, to the motion my leader has tabled today.

I want to bring us back a little bit to the Far North Act. When this act was going through the House, the divide was obvious. We would go to the north side of the building and see all the First Nations, all the reeves, some clergy from the north and some councillors from the north. They were all there. They were all opposed. They wanted their voice to be heard. They didn't have an opportunity to be heard. Then, on the front lawn you had the environmentalists, who were applauding. It was like the great divide. On this bill, the north lost. The voice of the north didn't have an opportunity to be heard. There was no vehicle for them to basically bring their concerns, and we saw what happened.

J'aimerais mentionner un éditorial qui est passé dans le journal français de Sudbury, *Le Voyageur*, qui décrit la loi sur le Grand Nord comme « de la bouillie pour les chats ». Je n'ai aucune idée comment traduire ça en anglais, mais en français c'est très clair : ça ne vaut pas grand-chose.

We'll now talk about Bill 151. I'd like to quote from Grand Chief Stan Beardy of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, who said that the province's wood tenure reform bill isn't worth the paper it's printed on, because it won't put First Nations in control of forests on their traditional land: "The best approach is to implement a community forestry tenure system putting First Nations in charge of managing forests on their homelands." They too would like an opportunity to be heard, and this is repeated all the time.

I was on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. That committee did travel. We went to the north. We came out with 23 recommendations. As the recommendations got tabled, the Ministry of Health tabled a bill that specifically addressed one of our recommendations, recommendation 13, about narcotics, and brought forward changes to the way narcotics are dispensed in this province.

We asked for that committee to travel. We asked for them to come to the north and see. The bill, as it is written, is written to fit perfectly well in big urban centres where you have a physician who prescribes you narcotics, where you shop it around to different pharmacies and where you go on and get addicted and all the other problems. In the north, it doesn't work like this. We wait for two months to see a physician, if we see one. Shopping around for different physicians? Who are they

kidding? If we can get one within a two-month period, we're happy. We don't shop around for physicians; we can't get access to one.

Yet they refuse to hold hearings in the north. We have this bill that will do some good, but that won't be appropriate to solve the problem in the north. Yet when we go into First Nations communities, one out of three people has an addiction to narcotic painkillers. The bill we passed will help people in the south and help people in big urban centres. It won't help the people of Nickel Belt.

Why is it that when this government brings bills forward, they don't take the time to realize that Ontario is vast, the north is different, it is beautiful, but we need to have our voices heard and this is not happening? So I'm happy to bring my voice to this, and I wish other northerners would have an opportunity to be heard also.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate.

Mr. David Oraziatti: I'm pleased to join this debate this afternoon on this bizarre motion. I'm a bit surprised, and the information here is overwhelming. There's a lot to say in a very little amount of time, so I'm going to do what I can. I know the member from Algoma-Manitowlin also wants to make comment on this.

First of all, let's talk a little bit about what's happened at committee. I want to raise an issue that the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington raised in my local media in Sault Ste. Marie. He said that the Chair, myself, the member of that committee, cut off debate at general government. That is an outright—well, the word starts with an L and I can't use it, right?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Could you withdraw that comment, please?

Mr. David Oraziatti: Okay, withdraw.

The member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington tells the media in my community that the Chair, who didn't vote on the matter, adjourned committee debate yesterday. That's absolutely untrue. Quite frankly, the member from Timmins-James Bay brought forward a motion to adjourn committee, and all members voted for that motion.

In fact, then the member goes to Sault Ste. Marie and he shows up at a gun registry rally. Here in the Sault Star it says that Mr. Hillier attended a gun registry rally at the campaign office of the federal Conservative candidate in Sault Ste. Marie. I'm not sure whether or not the taxpayers are paying for the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington to attend gun rallies across the province of Ontario, but I think it's a fair question that we ask. I don't know if the Leader of the Opposition—

Mr. Steve Clark: On a point or order, Madam Speaker: What's that got to do with the motion?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I hear your point of order, thank you.

The member will continue.

Mr. David Oraziatti: That's not a point of order; that's right, Speaker. I agree with your ruling. The member protests too much across the way.

Then he shows up in Mr. Boniferro's hardwood lumber mill, and what does Mr. Boniferro say? He says that "he had not been contacted prior to the event and Hillier was not welcome on the property." How do you like that, Speaker?

I'm getting really tired of the opposition here who suggests that the government is not having adequate consultation, is not taking our legislation out to the people of Ontario, when we as a government are more than happy to put our record up against your record when it comes to consultations and public debate on bills any day of the week. This is quite frustrating.

First of all, the member from Lanark suggests to my community that I cut off debate; that's absolutely untrue. The member from Timmins-James Bay introduced a motion and adjourned the debate on the committee.

The other point—and there are a couple of others to make here, but right now, I think the most important thing that we can add is that there have been consultations on this bill. We've had 116 consultations on Bill 151. We have had these consultations for two years.

I hear members across the way saying that we need to support the forestry sector, that we need to move more quickly to do that. While the members across the way would like to suggest that our government has somehow created the demise or challenges in the forestry sector, let's talk about the Canadian dollar for a moment, because I can tell you that at St. Marys Paper in Sault Ste. Marie, they will tell you that when the dollar moved from 65 cents, every cent along the way they lost \$1.5 million.

The energy costs: We are dealing with those. We've got the northern industrial energy rate. The member across the way forgets that they voted against that when they had the opportunity to do something about that. St. Marys also has a power purchase agreement to support—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Please stop the clock for a second. Member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, please take it down a notch.

Mr. David Oraziatti: When members have no concept of what's going on in northern Ontario, no idea of what's going on at the mills and the industries, they often protest too much, right? And off-message and off-base.

On the issue of the dollar, every cent the dollar moves up, the company in my community lost \$1.5 million—over \$40 million.

1710

Do you want to talk about energy? The northern Ontario energy program: a \$150-million response. A \$1-billion forestry aid package that was brought in by the McGuinty government and that you guys voted against: It was the largest aid package in the country for the forestry sector. The power purchase agreement that has been signed with OPA and St. Marys Paper, which you do not support: a \$175-million project that will come to life in Sault Ste. Marie to help reduce energy costs for our local mill.

I'm very disappointed in the opposition. When we had the opportunity to move forward on a number of these

issues, they voted against them. We don't want to go back to the days when the NDP passed and imposed the social contract, took \$60 million out of the northern Ontario Heritage fund—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Stop the clock, please. I know emotions are running high. It's 10 past 5. We want to hear from everyone. Please take it down a notch; it's difficult even for me to hear. Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. David Oraziatti: I'm really excited about this debate, and I think there's important information that we need on the record here, because quite frankly, we can't afford to go back to the nonsense that took place in northern Ontario under the NDP. You talk about respect for northerners? You took \$60 million out of the northern Ontario heritage fund. That sounds like respect for northerners? We increased that fund—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Speak through the Speaker, please, member for Sault Ste. Marie.

Mr. David Oraziatti: —from \$60 million to \$100 million.

I'm really excited about the bill, Bill 151, because I think it's important for the forestry industry in northern Ontario. It's important that we modernize the forest sector act. It's important that we modernize the industry so that we can have more job opportunities in the north for northerners, for new businesses to start, to be able to create opportunities in the north. We know that members across the way are married to the status quo; they are mired in a history that is not productive in today's economy, in today's forestry model, in today's environment, and we need to move on.

This bill has been discussed for years. Northerners can't wait anymore. These folks across the way would like to say, "You know what? We need to talk about it some more." We've talked about it, 116 consultations. We've had hearings here. We've had Tembec out saying this is good and we need to move forward. We've got St. Marys Paper saying we need to move forward. Folks out there in the sector want to see growth and opportunity, and we cannot continue with the same status quo that has gone on in the sector.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek. We were doing well there.

Mr. David Oraziatti: Now, if the members opposite would like to say that the forest sector doesn't have challenges today and it doesn't need to be modernized, and if they want to head down that road, I think northerners are going to tell them that the reality is much, much different. We've had two years of discussions on this. We need to move on. This is an important piece of legislation that will bring growth and prosperity to a sector where it is sorely needed.

While we address challenges around energy and other challenges around wood supply, we cannot affect the

Canadian dollar as much as we would obviously like to on this issue, and that has been the key factor in challenges for the forestry sector. But if we sit here today and get mired down in the old way and the old status quo when it comes to the forestry sector and the backward thinking of the NDP and the opposition, we are not going to bring new jobs to northern Ontario; we are not going to bring new opportunities to the forest sector, the bio-forestry economy, and the economy that is anxiously awaiting the opportunity to be modernized and to grow.

I'm very pleased with the work and the leadership of the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry and our minister, and also my colleague the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, who speaks passionately about this. And I know my colleague the member from Algoma–Manitoulin who wants to speak to this bill is going to have that opportunity. But I'm excited about this bill moving forward because this is important for northern Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate? The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I didn't know if I was ever going to get the chance to get up there. Maybe I could have a glass of water too, please.

It's interesting that the member for Sault Ste. Marie said we've been talking about this bill for years. The bill had first reading on February 23 of this year. Now, I'm sure he probably meant that the issue has been around, but, you know, there is an issue—the issue has been discussed. It was discussed in my riding, but it wasn't a consultation; it was the minister coming into town and telling the folks at the meeting, "This is what we plan to do." It wasn't about, "What do you think we should do?" No. That's a consultation. A consultation is when you actually sit down with people and say, "We'd like to have your input. We'd like to have your input as to how we could take this issue and make the circumstances that govern it better." That was not what happened at those hearings. I was there. The minister came in and said, "This is what we're going to do." No one had a chance to say, "Well, we don't think that's a good idea," or, "We do think that's a good idea."

Anyway, interestingly enough, I just received from the table—which speaks to the government's whole position on this bill or when it comes to issues affecting the north—a motion for time allocation on Bill 151. We're now being told that the very bill that has acted to serve as the genesis for the NDP opposition day motion, the very bill that was the reason they brought forward this opposition day motion, is going to be time-allocated. On May 4, the day after we return from the Easter constituency week, the general government committee will be meeting for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill. It will then be ordered for third reading. Do you know how much debate is going to be allowed for third reading? Do you know how much debate is going to be allowed for third reading on a bill that has a significant

impact on the history of northern Ontario and its people? Do you know how much time is going to be allowed for debate? One hour—one hour. That's the total debate. The total length of debate on third reading is going to be one hour.

I understand why the New Democrats brought forth this opposition day motion. For the most part, I support this motion. There is an issue in there that I'm going to talk about a little later, which is the reason why I'm not going to be able to support the motion as it stands, but I don't have the opportunity to amend the motion. I'll speak to that in a few minutes.

I heard the member from Kenora–Rainy River earlier. I heard the leader of the third party. I heard the member from Nickel Belt. One thing resonates almost on a repeated basis, and that's the concern that members of this House continue to exhibit regarding the habit of this government—it's almost like it has just said that nothing outside of Toronto matters anymore. That's what they're saying to us, and I have grave concerns about that.

I have a small part of northern Ontario in my riding. It's a small part, but it's a part nevertheless. Every time we see this government act, it seems that, as my friend from Kenora–Rainy River said, the decisions are made in a backroom somewhere in Toronto; it may even be in this building. It's a backroom somewhere, where the people of the province of Ontario don't seem to be a part of the conversation.

I've certainly spoken. I had the opportunity to speak to the bill on second reading, and I was glad to have that opportunity. I reminded the members how this is not the answer. People across the province, in my riding, have told them so; people across northern Ontario have told them so. But they asked for an opportunity; they asked for an opportunity not as part of, as the member for Sault Ste. Marie talked about, the pre-consultation process, as they like to think of it. No. They asked for the opportunity to speak to this bill once it was tabled in this Legislature, and for the most part, they have been denied. They have been denied that opportunity because the government said, notwithstanding what the member for Algoma–Manitoulin said—as my friend from Leeds–Grenville said, he had two different stories: one in front of the committee when he was doing his job, doing what he was told to do by the Premier's office, following orders; and then another story when he was speaking to the local media.

1720

If those committee hearings were held up north, then that committee would have been open to those people in northern Ontario who might want to come before that committee and have their say. But there were no committee hearings. It's really sad, but that's the way this government has gotten. As sure as the sun is going to rise in the east, you can almost be assured that where there's a contentious bill before this House, we'll be getting a sheet—myself and the other government House leader will be getting a sheet—that says, "Uh-oh, it's time allocation time here in the Legislative Assembly." That's the way they do business here.

I don't want to use all the time because my friend from Durham wants to speak to this bill as well. But I do want to say that my friends in the third party almost had me. I was that close to being prepared to vote for this motion, and then something slipped in here and caught my eye, and I have to say, I'm not going to be able to do it, friends. You had a great motion here. It stuck to the bill and it stuck to the issue of northern Ontario, but then, I suspect, there was a call from Jack Layton's office. They wanted to insert this thing that really has nothing to do with the bill but has something to do with the federal election.

We want to be clear on what it says. They're talking about the HST. "In co-operation with the Harper government," it says here. We want to be perfectly clear: The Harper government, at the request of the McGuinty government, passed legislation that allows the McGuinty government to do what they want to do with respect to a harmonized sales tax. The request came from the provincial government, and the request came for one reason and one reason alone: because Premier McGuinty believed that there was some money left in people's pockets that he hadn't gotten his hands on yet. So they brought in the HST, and he believes now—he's almost there. He's almost there with his HST, but mark my words, if this government is re-elected, if this McGuinty government is re-elected, you're not going to see a 13% HST. Mark my words, folks: This government will raise that rate, because they are addicted to those taxes. If they get even the slightest inclination that there is something left in the pockets of struggling families, struggling seniors and hard-working small businesses in this province, they'll want a cut of it—mark my words. Watch out if those folks are re-elected. That Premier right there will impose a hefty increase on the HST in this province.

Having said that, I'm going to pass it on to my friend from Durham. He has some wise advice on this motion as well. But as a result of the overly partisan way that they brought the federal government into this, unfortunately, I won't be able to support the motion. Every other part of it, though, is bang on; it's right on. It's right for northerners, and it's about time those folks on the other side started to stand up for northern Ontario as well.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal: This does give me the opportunity to get on the record this afternoon about this motion. In fact, interestingly enough, in the northern part of the Peterborough riding we have the protected Peterborough county forest, and above that we do have some forest operations, not as significant, of course, as in northern Ontario, but we do have a small forestry industry supplying well-known businesses such as Monaghan Lumber. You've probably seen the ad on TV: "King of the Woods." So they do—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Andy Frost, King of the Woods.

Mr. Jeff Leal: King of the Woods—Andy Frost does that impersonation. He also does the afterplay for The

Toronto Maple Leafs, but I won't talk about them and their problems with success over the last 45 years.

We do have a small forestry business in the northern end of the Peterborough riding. It is interesting that when you read all the reports over the last number of years—and I have taken the opportunity in the business sections of the *Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star*, *National Post*, *Canadian Business* magazine and all the rest—and what they have consistently said is that the great impact on the forestry business in the province of Ontario was the exchange rate. For the longest period of time, there was a 63-cent dollar, which gave Ontario businesses a 45% discount on every product they were selling in their largest market, which was the United States. Over the last little while we have seen a significant appreciation in the exchange rate. Just today, the loonie is now at an all-time high, almost \$1.05, in terms of exchange rate with the United States.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's not an all-time high.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I tell my friend from Barry's Bay that that was on the business network this afternoon, the loonie hitting an all-time high. So I recommend that he take the opportunity to review the business results of this day. That has had a tremendous impact.

Secondly, of course, was the decline of the new home industry in the United States. Madam Speaker, you and I are well aware of the destruction that was brought about through the shenanigans on Wall Street—the lack of regulation on Wall Street. The American financial system was on the verge of collapse because of the sub-prime mortgages that were being traded 50 to 20 times over, and at the end of the day, of course, that had a tremendous impact on the American housing industry. One of the largest areas of export for the Ontario forestry industry from northern Ontario into the United States was the American housing industry.

I think it's important that we look at these circumstances in an objective way to really get an appreciation of where we're at today.

Mr. John Yakabuski: When did you guys agree to raise the HST?

Mr. Jeff Leal: But with regards to the HST—I hear my friend from Barry's Bay—it is interesting: The Honourable Jim Flaherty, the federal finance minister, is on the record in several publications, including the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star*—all the major newspapers across Canada—indicating that the HST was good tax policy.

With those few words, I've gone on the record this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: First, as a courtesy, listening to the debate today were some friends that I know that would have liked to have stayed, but it got a little rowdy here, so they left. One fellow was named Dalt Hicks, and he's the owner and president of the Cardinal Golf Club. He's a great friend and it's a great golf course. They were here as part of lobby day with the Ontario Allied Golf

Associations. I would say that there were other members that I met with as well in that group.

Others who just left here a few minutes ago were a couple of very good friends from Durham who listened to the member from Oshawa speaking. Dave Sitaram—he lives in my riding now—is a director for the Co-operators. He's one of the people hosting the Ontario Co-op reception when all of the wrangling is done here this afternoon. With him was Don Nicholls, who's the manager for the Auto Workers Community Credit Union in my riding.

With that, I'll refer to the order of the day, the opposition day motion. It's been a kind of enthusiastic and, some would say, entertaining debate. It is true, if you look at the details of this particular opposition day motion, it has really received a fair amount of support from our members who participated in the general government committee that dealt with Bill 151. On that committee, I can only attest that the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington—who, by the way, is up north travelling to listen to the voices of northern Ontario, and, really, he's been widely received, because he does stand for the fundamentals that northern Ontario is a self-reliant part of Ontario that should be recognized.

1730

I've followed some of this. I want to commend not just the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington there, I want to commend the member from Timmins-James Bay. He's been consistent on this part of what we're talking about today, on Bill 151, about the lack—in fact, the complete disregard for the voice of northern Ontario. If it wasn't for him and a few others—the McGuinty government has centralized their whole thing on just getting elected in urban Ontario. I hate to say it. It's so cynical that, even in my riding of Durham, which is a very large part and a very proud part of Ontario—and the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke the same: We have communities, but we have a large part of rural Ontario.

I would only say this: I think our members on the committee, with Mr. Clark, of course, from Leeds-Grenville, worked very hard as well. But I did have the chance to read—I thought this was quite objective. It's called the Working Forest. This is the edition for winter 2011. It's a very good paper. In fact, I'd to have say that the member from Kenora-Rainy River—pardon me; Mike Brown, rather. He's here.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Algoma-Manitoulin. Pardon me. That's Mr. Brown, right? Okay, very good.

He says that he knows the owner of this. Well, he should pay attention to it. I hope, if he gets to say a few things later on here, that he's going to make reference to this. I'm reading right here from page 2, and it says, "Wood supply"—and they're talking about it. It goes on:

"Atikokan Renewable Fuels acquired the idled FibraTech plant two years ago, after the latter firm went into receivership"—one more casualty of the McGuinty

government. "The company is now in the process of converting the plant into a pellet-making operation."

Here's the important part: "The province announced the allocation to Atikokan Renewable Fuels on January 31.

"A spokeswoman for Northern Development, Mines and Forestry Minister Michael Gravelle said more announcements from the wood supply competition will be made in the coming weeks.

"While the community of Atikokan rejoices in their success another northwestern Ontario community, Ignace, is trying to understand the Ontario government's rationale for awarding new wood supply agreements.

"Two local companies have put in proposals to use the forest resource—one was rejected, the other company hasn't heard anything," said Ignace mayor, Lee Kennard in a recent media statement.

It goes on to say, "Ignace still has a skilled work force," Kennard said. "We've lost workers who continue to maintain a house in Ignace and a house in Thunder Bay or in other parts of the country. We need the provincial government to make a decision," says Kennard."

It says, "Many people in the existing or potential biomass sector are frustrated with how slowly the provincial government is releasing the results of the wood supply ... process."

This is very controversial all throughout northern Ontario, and it's an important part of the economy. Why wouldn't you go up and listen to the real people? That's all we're asking. In fact, you can count on Tim Hudak and the opposition. We've talked about this. We've represented it at the general government hearings. We've supported the NDP. We've done everything we possibly can to encourage, respectfully, and encourage in a positive way, the minister, Mr. Gravelle, to go up there and listen to the people, to at least have the courtesy of showing up. That's all this is about: It's courtesy more than anything else.

The passion that I've heard around this sometimes seemed a bit feigned. I would say to the member who spoke earlier and loudly, the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan, Mr. Mauro—he was very loud and very adamant about it. He should be standing up and telling Premier McGuinty. He should be standing up this day—

Mr. Steve Clark: Rise up.

Mr. John O'Toole: Rise up, exactly, is what I'm hearing—to pull that famous line.

The member from Sault Ste. Marie, Mr. Oraziotti, also spoke in a similarly passionate tone. I would expect him to be calling on the Premier in his remarks. I anticipated that he'd be calling on him to go to northern Ontario. At least have some respect.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, they're not. They're only listening to the Toronto voices, the people in the rich condos. That's all they're listening to now. They've stopped listening.

How's your energy bill? How's your car insurance? How's the tuition? They've stopped listening. Actually, they've lost their way.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order.

Mr. John O'Toole: There's a lot of shouting here, but they've lost their way.

Premier McGuinty is living in Rosedale, I think, and has a chauffeured car. After so long on the job, it's hard to keep them focused on representing people, and that's all this whole discussion this afternoon is about. But the poison pill of the debate that's causing most of the outrage and most of the anxiety—it's the unfortunate plant of the poison pill, the poison pestle, or whatever they call it—there's a famous quote there from a movie, but I won't go there.

What has happened here is, they've—Jack Layton has called—I'd hate to say it. I don't think he spoke to Andrea personally, but I'm sure the message—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Would you please refer to the member's riding or status?

Mr. John O'Toole: The leader of the third party, a wonderful speaker: She spoke very passionately, and not insincerely, either.

Here's the issue: They put a little thing here, acquiescing, because of the federal election, to Jack Layton, who's in trouble; he's probably going over the cliff. But the only thing is, here's what's happening: The way I see it is, he said, "In BC, I'm for the HST"—no, he's against it in BC, and he's for it in Nova Scotia. He's duplicitous, at best, if not an outright—"ambivalent" would be a better word, perhaps.

But my point is that they've been called into this—and it's shameful, really, unfortunately, but I understand. Duty calls. Party loyalty falls into line. I can see that. But it really is this. They're trying to wedge everybody because really, Premier McGuinty made a direct call to Jim Flaherty. In fact, it was probably Greg Sorbara who called, because he runs things, pretty well. He called Flaherty—because they're pretty good friends—and he said, "If you'll give us \$4 billion, we'll hike this HST. We'll stuff it in their ear." And that's what they're doing. Premier McGuinty said, "My goodness, I'm going to get \$3 billion more in revenue for every point in the HST? Wow, this is a jackpot. And I can blame it on you." So that's what they're doing. The Liberals are continually blaming this move, their own policy decision, on Stephen Harper.

The NDP have fallen into line here. I don't understand it, because we think they have it right. We want Premier McGuinty to go up north with Tim Hudak and Randy Hillier to listen to the people of Ontario, show some respect and get it right.

As far as this opposition day motion goes, I'm kind of divided, because I know how important the north is. It's like any region of Ontario; it needs to be heard. In that respect, in spirit, I'm for the motion. But in fact, I'm going to have to say that that one indication that somehow this is Stephen Harper's fault just doesn't settle very well.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Normally, the party that moves the motion would get the last word, but Mr. Brown wants the last word, so we'll give it to him.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Maybe he's not going to speak at all. Who knows?

I want to, first of all, congratulate Andrea Horwath for having brought forward this motion. We've had much discussion within our caucus as a result of discussions we've had with people in northern Ontario. The people of the north have been quite clear. They're saying, "Here's a government that thinks it can do things and not talk to northern Ontario about it." What this motion says, if passed, is that the government of Ontario cannot do the type of things that we've seen under Bill 151, that we've seen under Bill 191, that we've seen under the HST and that we've seen under the deregulation and the continuing privatization of electricity in northern Ontario; that they would not be able to do those things without a real consultation and discussion with northerners. I can tell you, we as New Democrats will be speaking to that in the next election for sure.

Let's speak specifically to Bill 151. The government's argument is this: "We went to"—how many communities, Mike? Two hundred communities, 300 communities, 1,000; I don't care what it was—"and we went out and we consulted across the north and we talked about what was going to be inside this bill." That is true; the government did go out and consult prior to the bill being introduced. But the problem is, when the bill came back to the House and was actually drafted—when it came back from the ministry and was drafted and tabled in this House—those people who were consulted in Hearst, in Timmins, in Sioux Lookout, in Sault Ste. Marie, in Kenora and in various communities said, "What does this have to do with what they talked to us about? The bill looks different than what they told us in the preconsultation."

1740

People said, "Listen, we want to talk about community forests." For example, the community of Hearst did a lot of work, along with Constance Lake, to talk about how you really create a community forest. They looked at these LFMCs that you're creating and they said, "That's not a community forest. It's a step in the right direction, but it's a very small baby step, and what's worse is that you're moving to a competitive wood pricing system that quite frankly is going to disadvantage northern Ontario."

People understand that if there's a keen demand for wood and you have a competition system in an LFMC, whoever bids the highest number on the wood is going to be the one to get it. So what happens when you're in eastern Ontario and a mill on the other side of the border in Quebec says, "You know what? I need that wood so badly that I'm prepared to outbid whoever wants it." How do I know that? Because it already happens with private wood. We have a competitive bidding system when it comes to private lands in Ontario where we cut wood, and by and large that wood ends up in the province of Quebec.

Here you are: You're going to be in Hearst, Kapuskasing, Timmins, Kirkland Lake and Mattawa, and they're going to be cutting down trees under an LFMC, if it's created there, and the wood is basically going to be bid on by somebody in Quebec and you're going to see your wood leave—no value added in the province of Ontario. People said, "This doesn't look like what you had said it was going to look like when you started our consultation."

Then on the issue of the larger forest companies, you basically took those licences and put them at risk. Companies like Tembec, Domtar, OFIA and others said, "Listen, you can't muck around with the licensing system and put the wood we have on licence at risk, because that's how we finance our mills." Rightfully so, those companies are concerned.

The government says, "Well, don't worry. We now have amendments. We've got five amendments." Here we are in committee. We got the amendments at 10 o'clock in the morning. We're sitting in committee at the time, and here we are, trying to struggle with how this amendment is going to work; we hadn't had a chance to clear those amendments with the stakeholders. So I put forward a number of motions. I don't have enough time to go through them, but one motion was: At least adjourn the committee so that we, as opposition members, as critics, can take your five amendments, go back to the stakeholders and say, "How does this meet with what you were asking for?" so that we'd at least have a sense if the amendments are acceptable to the stakeholders.

The government—I give them some credit—decided, "Okay, let's allow that to happen," because quite frankly, we would have just kept moving motions all day, and you would have never got your amendments on that day. The government understood that and, rather than sit there and allow that to happen, they voted for my motion.

Here's the kicker. Now, we're going out and currently talking to those people who had concerns about this issue and talking about those five amendments, and a little while ago we get slipped under the door of the Legislature to the clerks' table, as they might say, a time allocation motion that shuts down all debate, that doesn't give any opportunity for northerners to really get a say in what's going to happen with this bill in its final prospect.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Maybe Brown can talk about that.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, I'm hoping Mr. Brown can talk about that. Mr. Brown, I'm going to talk about another issue in a second—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Excuse me. Could the member mention Algoma-Manitoulin, his riding?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Algoma-Manitoulin. It's not Kapuskasing; that would be Carol Hughes. I would have that wrong.

My point is this: The government time-allocated this bill, and it doesn't matter a heck now if you like the amendments, if you don't like the amendments or if you think there need to be new amendments. This whole

thing is going to die on Wednesday, May 4, when we come back and go into committee. It's time-allocated. If things are not done by a certain time and we don't get to the section of the bill that needs to be amended, all government motions will be deemed to be passed. That is not consultation.

What northern Ontarians—FONOM; the municipalities of Hearst, Kapuskasing, Espanola and a whole bunch of other communities—said very clearly was that this government had not consulted on Bill 151, that this bill did not look anything like it was supposed to, according to the preconsultations, and they wanted to have public hearings—something they were refused.

Now, here's the fun part. The member from Algoma-Manitoulin goes back to his riding. There is a lot of pressure on, because the mayors across the north and industry are out there. They're asking people to put some pressure on the government so that we can have some public hearings. So the media in his riding come up to him in Espanola or Manitoulin—I forget where—and they say, "Mr. Brown, why is it that you're opposed to having public hearings in northern Ontario?"

What does he say? "Oh, I want them in Espanola. I want this bill to go to every community in northern Ontario, and I don't believe it should be the cities that should be the ones having public hearings on those bills." If I was a journalist, I would believe that the member from Algoma-Manitoulin was basically saying that he was in favour of public hearings.

He says one thing to his constituents when he's asked by the media, then he comes down here, and what does he do? He's the guy who's basically running gunshot so that we can't have public hearings. He's the guy who led the charge on the part of the Liberal government at the general government that quashed the opposition sub-committee report that would have allowed for travel in northern Ontario. Mr. Brown, the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, is the same member who did everything that his House leader told him, everything that his minister told him and everything that his Premier told him in order to not give northern Ontario a say when it came to these particular hearings.

So I say to the member from Algoma-Manitoulin: You can't have it both ways. Yes, I know that Liberals like to try that. They tell you one thing and they do the opposite, but I can tell you, the people of this province, and specifically the people of northern Ontario, will remember that when it came to standing up for them, what you did was say one thing to your constituents through the media, and you did quite differently when you came down here.

We as New Democrats, under the leadership of our leader, Andrea Horwath, are saying that the people of northern Ontario count. The people of northern Ontario must be consulted. You cannot continue down the route that you have, where you put in place bills like Bill 151, the Far North planning act and the implementation of the HST, without having some form of consultation with people in northern Ontario. This government was wrong

not to allow that bill to travel, and this government will pay the price for not having done so at the next election.

I say, on behalf of the New Democratic Party of Ontario, that we stand with you, the fellow northerners in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Full of sound and fury, but signifying absolutely nothing. What we've heard here is no debate on Bill 151, no debate on what is good for northerners, and I think that's truly unfortunate. It's truly unfortunate.

I represent many of the small forestry communities across northern Ontario. They would prefer members to speak to bills that affect them in a way that is respectful of northern Ontario communities, respectful of what their members are talking about and respectful of the facts. Respect is what this is about, and just because—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: The member just admitted on Monday, at committee, that they would not talk about anything. All they would do is ask for 20-minute adjournment after 20-minute adjournment. After close to two hours of that, the government supported the member for Timmins-James Bay's motion to adjourn because he did not want to talk about the bill. He did not want to talk about amendments to the bill.

And you know what? We needed to file our amendments so that everyone could see the amendments that were proposed to the bill. The government proposed five; we proposed five amendments to the bill.

I have in my hand what the NDP thinks needs to be changed in the bill. Here it is: They have one amendment. That's what they decided needed to be changed in this bill.

Mr. Jeff Leal: One amendment?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: One amendment that, frankly, the government will not support because it's already in the bill. One thing is what the NDP thought should happen to change this bill.

We have, over time—well over two years—talked about Bill 151. Somewhere here I have the list of communities we've gone to, and it is extensive.

That's not the one. It's here somewhere.

It doesn't matter. It's 116 communities all across northern Ontario, 45 in southern Ontario, and we've heard what people had to say.

Interjections.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Right at the bottom, Mike; right at the bottom.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Member from Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Right at the bottom here we have Beardmore, Bower, Cochrane, Chapleau, Fox Lake reserve, Constance Lake First Nation, Dryden, Fort Frances, Hearst, Hornepayne, Huntsville, Gogama, Kapuskasing, Macdiarmid, Marathon, Midland, Parry

Sound, Nipigon, North Bay, Pembroke, Sault Ste. Marie, Sioux Lookout, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Timmins, Toronto and White River. That is consultation. That's taking the concept across the province, finding out what northerners really think.

We were out there for over two years. It is time at some point we realize that the forest communities, the forest workers and the forest companies come out of this recession with an ability to move into the future, to have jobs that will be sustained over time by the forests that the people of Ontario own.

So as we went through this, we were hoping that the opposition parties would co-operate and we could talk about what we needed to do in a reasonable fashion, but what we got was the normal bluster from the opposition, no real solutions, lots of talk of consultation but no real ideas.

I'm with the Minister of Natural Resources, who just said in Timmins on Thursday, "If two years isn't enough, what is?"

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order. Could the members please take their seats. Thank you.

Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 4. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

This will be a 10-minute bell. Call in the members.

The division bells rang from 1752 to 1802.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 4. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Prue, Michael
Gélinas, France	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
Hampton, Howard	Miller, Paul	

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Hoskins, Eric	Naqvi, Yasir
Arnott, Ted	Hoy, Pat	Oraziotti, David
Bailey, Robert	Jaczek, Helena	Phillips, Gerry
Balkissoon, Bas	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramal, Khalil
Bentley, Christopher	Johnson, Rick	Rinaldi, Lou
Brotten, Laurel C.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Brown, Michael A.	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Brownell, Jim	Mangat, Amrit	Sergio, Mario
Chan, Michael	Martiniuk, Gerry	Smith, Monique
Chiarelli, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Sousa, Charles
Clark, Steve	Miller, Norm	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Moridi, Reza	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gerretsen, John	Munro, Julia	Yakubuski, John
Gravelle, Michael	Murray, Glen R.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 8; the nays are 44.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I declare the motion defeated.

Motion negatived.

Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

HOSPITAL FUNDING

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member for Beaches–East York has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given on Wednesday, April 13, 2011, by the Minister of Health. This member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Mr. Michael Prue: On April 6, 2011, I asked a question of the Premier. The budget had \$35 billion in it in infrastructure money to be spent across the province on good works. I asked the Premier if the redevelopment of Toronto East General Hospital was part of that \$35 billion in expenditure. The Premier chose not to answer the question but instead bounced it to the Minister of Health, who congratulated me and the CEO of Toronto East General Hospital, Rob Devitt. I have nothing to say to her except that I concur with the praise, but she did not answer the question.

We know that under Mr. Devitt's leadership, Toronto East General Hospital has balanced 10 yearly budgets in a row. We know that Rob Devitt is a health care leader, and he has, in fact, been lent out to other hospitals to get them in line when they couldn't meet what they were supposed to do and they couldn't balance their budget. We know that Toronto East General Hospital has excellent staff. We know that it's a good teaching hospital. We also know that they've spent the last six years trying to convince this government to give them some funding to redevelop the hospital, which is very old and in some places in a very sorry state of repair. I outlined how six people are living in a room, which is not good disease control, because they share one washroom. I talked about the sewage leaks and everything else that is taking place in a hospital that is 70 years old in parts.

I went on. I talked about how the plans had been submitted to build a new wing and tear down an old part and put up a new part. I talked about the public hearings that have already been held to redevelop Toronto East General Hospital—public hearings mandated under the Municipal Act. I talked about the financing from the province of Ontario and that the hospital is anxious to start as soon as possible because everything else is in place. I also spoke about the fear that the government will make them wait until the lead-up to the election. The hospital people have told me and I've told this House that what we expect is that sometime in September this great, big, fake cheque, along with the local Liberal candidate,

will show up at the hospital and the money will be there. But the hospital doesn't want to wait that long. They don't want to be part of the circus that is used as a backdrop to a Liberal election rollout in the two ridings of Beaches–East York and Toronto–Danforth, because the hospital is right on Coxwell Avenue, on the border.

The Minister of Infrastructure, who had been bounced the question by the Minister of Health, at that stage refused to answer it again—because it had been passed to him. He spoke about the perceived failures of the previous Harris–Eves governments. I don't know what that had to do with the question. It had nothing at all to do with the question. Whether the Harris–Eves governments failed in hospital funding or not was totally irrelevant to whether Toronto East General is going to get part of this \$35 billion that has been earmarked for good works across Ontario. It had nothing to do with the question.

The questions I asked then and the questions I begged to ask again today, because they remain unanswered after all these weeks, are simple ones. Firstly, is Toronto East General on the infrastructure list to receive part of the \$35 billion so that they can continue and carry out the redevelopment of the hospital that has been their intention and that they've been asking for for the last six years? Secondly, if they are in fact on that list, when will the money flow—before or during the next election? Mr. Devitt, who is an acknowledged leader in the field, wants to know. The people of East York, the Beach and Scarborough want to know. They want to develop the hospital now. They don't want to be some sideshow to this government producing the cheque in September in advance of the election with all the fanfare we expect.

1810

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm delighted to be able to speak on behalf of the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and respond to the member from Toronto–Beaches.

Let me just begin by saying that the ministry does recognize the service that Toronto East General Hospital has provided to its community and the need that Toronto East General has to maintain a viable infrastructure to continue to provide these health care services.

We recognize, as the member has said, that this is an older hospital that does need redevelopment, although unfortunately it is not in the current five-year infrastructure plan, as the member knows. But we do understand that it does need redevelopment, and because the Ministry of Health and our government understand that it requires redevelopment, we have actually previously given Toronto East General a capital planning grant of \$3.3 million on April 20—fortuitously, also my birthday—2007, along with an increase to the grant of an additional \$5.2 million on May 29, 2008, for a total planning grant of up to \$8.5 million to assist the hospital to develop the first two stages of capital planning, which are known as stage 1—proposal—and stage 2—functional program. The ministry has received the hospital's updated stage 1 proposal and the functional proposal.

Now, when the ministry initially looked at those two proposals, the stage 1 and stage 2, there were actually substantial changes and mismatches from the proposal to the functional program stage submissions. Since this submission of the stage 2 proposal, the hospital, the ministry and the Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network have all been working together to reach agreement on what the scope of the project should be, because, as I say, those two proposals were somewhat out of sync.

However, recognizing that they're continuing to work on getting those two phases in sync in terms of what's being proposed, what's generally being proposed is that phase 1 of the redevelopment, and there are three proposed phases, has been planned—and this would mean something to the people in East York—to address the highest priorities for redevelopment and consists of demolishing a parking lot and the E and F wings to build an eight-storey building with ambulatory services accommodated on the first two levels; third floor, administration and mechanical; fourth floor, children and youth; fifth floor, adult mental health and complex continuing care; and then above that, three floors of in-patient units; plus underground parking. A two-and-a-half storey podium building is proposed beside the eight-storey building and adjacent to the G and H wings, and will be occupied by ambulatory services, as well as admitting. Within the existing portion of the hospital that's to be kept, the emergency department would be reconfigured and expanded, and eventually, as the phases proceed, wings A, B, D and F will be—"decanted" is the official wording, but it means taken out of service to prepare for demolition.

That's the proposal that is on the table at the moment. As the member mentioned, there is currently money in the budget for major capital projects, but the stage we are at—and this is why the Minister of Infrastructure would have been involved in the conversation—is that we're working right now on preparing a new, long-term capital plan. This project, along with hundreds of other projects from an assortment of ministries, is on the table for inclusion in that long-term capital plan. This is very actively a project that the Ministry of Health is supporting, and it has been put forward as a project that should be considered as part of the government's long-term capital plan.

LONG-TERM CARE

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member for Nickel Belt has also given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given on Wednesday, April 20, 2011, by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

M^{me} France Gélinas: This week I told the Minister of Health that people in my riding and in Sudbury have been waiting up to five years for spousal reunification because they are stuck in different long-term-care beds,

and I asked her why spousal reunification was not a priority. She answered that I was wrong, that spousal reunification is a priority. I guess the part that she didn't realize is that Sudbury Regional Hospital, the hospital serving the people of Sudbury in my riding, has been under a crisis situation for seven years. That means that for the last seven years, thousands of people have been assigned the first bed available. That means it doesn't matter that you want to go to the nursing home where your wife or husband is or you want to go to the nursing home where the rest of your family—your sisters and brothers—is; you have to go to the first available bed.

But it doesn't stop there. Then those people are lied to. We tell those people, "Take the first available bed and then we'll put you on a waiting list to transfer." Well, those people are on waiting lists to transfer to nowhere. I have, since I have become an MPP, had the opportunity to hear dozens of families that have come to me. Before this I had never seen grown men cry, but because of what's going on in Sudbury, I see this now, families that are torn apart, just ragged because of the situation we are putting them through, because all they want is for their mom and dad to be together in the same room for their last years, but they can't.

There's this man at Extendicare Falconbridge who called the CCAC. He was put into the first available bed at Extendicare Falconbridge. His wife is at Pioneer Manor. Every day he called the CCAC and said, "Where am I on the list? I'm worried about my wife. I want to go see my wife." Every day he called. He never got to see his wife. She died. When that happened, it had been two years. For two years, this man called every day and never got to see his wife.

I have many couples like this. I have a couple in my riding. I'm not allowed to use their names; we'll call them Alphonse and Alice. It's the same idea: They have been married for a very, very long time. They both have their papers to go to a long-term-care facility. It doesn't matter what we do. I've met with Richard Joly, who's the head of the CCAC, and Kim Morris, who's in charge of—we've tried every trick in the book to try to get those two people in the same room in the same nursing home in Sudbury. It is impossible. What have we got? I've got a family that is run ragged. Those two people live at home with their daughter. The daughter is at the end of her wits. She can't handle two heavy-care persons in her own home. The brothers are at the end of their wits. They pay for home care out of their own money, up to \$6,000 a month to keep their mom and dad together. This is how important it is for them to keep their mom and dad together. All they want is to be in the same room, in the same nursing home, but I can't get this.

Jeanette Lacroix, who made the front page of the Sudbury Star, in 2008 reluctantly agreed to go to Extendicare York with this big lie: "You will be on the waiting list to transfer." She wants to go to Pioneer Manor to be with her family. Since 2008, Jeanette has called. Her children have called. She wants to transfer. We're now in 2011. She is still stuck at Extendicare York and her family is

still at Pioneer Manor. Then, I have the minister who stands there and says, "Oh, reunification is a priority." Doesn't a priority happen closer than three years?

Should I keep on? I think I'm running out of time.

1820

We have a beautiful seniors campus; it's called Finlandia-Koti. They have a residential home; they have a nursing home; they have supported housing. He is in supported housing. She is in a nursing home, and she has lived in the village of Finlandia-Koti for years. She took the first bed available; she's at the other end of town. The rest of the people are at Finlandia-Koti; her husband is there. She wants to be reunified while she can.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Once again, I'm pleased to respond on behalf of the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I think, perhaps, it would be helpful if I were to start at the beginning in explaining this.

The system, as it currently exists, is that all residents of Ontario's long-term-care homes pay for the cost of living—because, in the original question, the member from Nickel Belt did raise issues around cost as well as priority. All residents of Ontario's long-term-care homes pay for the cost of living in their long-term-care home; that is, the cost of things like food, heat, water and lodging that they would otherwise pay for if they lived independently. The maximum rate for that—maximum rate—is \$1,619 for basic accommodation, and there are government subsidies available for low-income individuals who qualify.

In addition, the government provides funding to long-term-care homes, and that includes the funding which pays for health care costs in the long-term-care homes. That amounts to about \$48,000 per year, per resident. However, no Ontarian will be turned away from a long-term-care home because of an inability to pay.

Where things get a little bit confusing is that the meaning of "basic accommodation" differs between older long-term-care homes and newer long-term-care homes. In a newer home, it tends to mean that two residents share a room, because that's the most who are ever in a room together in a newer long-term-care home, so it makes reunification easier in a newer home.

In some of the older homes, "basic accommodation" can mean that three or four residents of the same gender share a room. In these older homes, a couple who want to share a room would have to pay a premium, which is about \$16 a couple per day, for an upgrade from basic accommodation, because that takes some other beds offline to get two into a semi-private room. Because they're paying the premium, they don't currently qualify for any of the subsidies.

In 2010, the government did introduce new regulations that enable residents who live in different long-term-care homes to switch places if that move is mutually desirable. The government did give high priority to residents who were seeking to be reunited with a spouse or partner.

The member from Nickel Belt may be skeptical about that, but I know that, in my own riding, I began to get calls complaining as to, "Why did Mr. So-and-so get to move in with his wife instead of my mother getting to move into a bed?" So I know that, in my riding, those reunifications are getting high priority, because I've heard from my constituents, in one way or another, that it's happening.

We are making some further changes. As I said, currently, married couples living in older long-term-care homes have to pay a premium to stay together in the same room. The government has announced its intent to make changes to ensure that married couples who want to live together will be charged the basic accommodation rate of \$1,619 each for a room with two beds, regardless of whether it's in an old home or a new home, and they will also be eligible for subsidies if they were previously individually eligible for subsidies, so they will be able to get the subsidies.

But just to reiterate: For spouses who have been placed in separate long-term-care homes and who want to be reunited, our policy does state that the reunification of spouses, with the exception of a crisis designation for placement, is in the top-priority category for placement.

Because the member for Nickel Belt suggested that it seems to her that this is not happening, the ministry has committed to looking into the specific issues in Sudbury and ensuring that the policy is being followed. But we can assure you that in July 2010, CCACs all over the province were provided with training to make sure that they understood the new rules around priority placements for spousal reunification—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member for Sarnia-Lambton has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given today by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question, as I earlier directed it to the minister—the minister surprised the community of Sarnia-Lambton with the announcement of the closure of the Sarnia jail in their budget. He said it was because it was underutilized, when in fact the community proved that this jail is actually at 105% of capacity. If the minister had done his homework, he would also know that the media has been reporting for over two years now that the Sarnia jail has too many inmates and not enough room, and that leads to the 105% occupancy.

The minister also stated that it made economic sense to close the Sarnia jail, but Sarnia is one of the few jails in the province that is running almost on a balanced budget. When I asked the minister to show me the numbers, he refused. Then today, Finance Minister Dwight

Duncan was quoted in the *Toronto Sun* that the decision to close the Sarnia jail and build the new facility in Windsor was made three years ago, and no one from my community was consulted. I feel that the minister knew that when he made that decision, he should have consulted with the RCMP, the Ontario Provincial Police, the legal community, the judiciary, Mayor Bradley, and other local community groups such as the chamber of commerce, plus many others.

One would only assume that they also did not inform Canada border services. I've been in contact with them, and they also have not been informed or consulted on this. They would have to transport their prisoners a total of three hours away to this new super-jail.

Last Thursday, a delegation led by the mayor of Sarnia, with myself, met with the minister to discuss this surprise budget announcement to close the Sarnia jail. At that meeting, the ministry, according to people who were at that meeting with myself—it's not myself saying this—felt that their courthouse was threatened as well.

This government said that they always believed that local leaders and families should be shown respect. But now they have used, according to members from the community, bully tactics and veiled threats like those made to the mayor of Sarnia, Mayor Bradley, and the other community representatives at that meeting: "If things don't go our way, then other things could happen."

I'd like to say to the minister that the Sarnia jail employs over 76 hard-working, dedicated employees. The jail in the finance minister's riding is over two and a half hours away. So when the Sarnia jail closes its doors, that's 76 jobs lost to the local community, along with their spouses, who are probably employed locally as well. That's 76 families who will be out of work or have to move away from home so that the finance minister can once again feather his nest.

The minister was quoted in the *Sarnia Observer* as saying that you can't say how much the government will save by closing Sarnia's jail and that you can't attach a price tag to shuttling prisoners back and forth to Windsor for court appearances. The minister is also quoted as saying that he doesn't "have the dollar figure right now."

My question would be: If not now, when? And I'd like to have those figures. Mayor Bradley has asked for them. I've filed freedom-of-information requests. I will get those answers. I'd like to say to the minister: Where did you get your numbers to support your statement that the Sarnia jail is underutilized, which I proved is not the case? How is my community to believe that the ministry can make an informed decision to close Sarnia's jail if you can't even supply us with the numbers and the cost-benefit analysis that anybody in business would make?

I was in private industry before I came here, and I know that if I went to my boss with an idea to make something for it, I'd have to make a business case and it would have to go before a number of other people in areas of responsibility who would agree with that.

1830

I'd like to ask, why was the decision to close the Sarnia jail made three years ago and yet no one from the

government bothered to consult with the Sarnia-Lambton community as a whole?

Lastly, I'd like to ask the minister, when will you accept responsibility and apologize for the threats made to Mayor Bradley and the delegation from Sarnia-Lambton by the ministry staff, when they were told to back off or risk losing their courthouse as well?

Again, where are the numbers?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Mr. Mario Sergio: I'm delighted to respond on behalf of Minister Bradley, the minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, to the question by the member from Sarnia-Lambton. I'd like to say to the member that I appreciate him rising in the House and posing the question on behalf of his constituents. But I would like to address the member as well and look at the entire situation, not only Sarnia itself but the other facilities—not only from his perspective of the riding of Sarnia-Lambton, but from that of the minister and the government, who have the responsibility to look at the correctional system throughout the province of Ontario.

Let me say to the member, and to the members of his own riding as well and throughout Ontario, that the responsibility of the minister and the government is to provide a correctional system that is safe, that is secure and that is effective, and at the same time to have a system that modernizes as we move along. That is part of the responsibility of this government. That is why I would say to the honourable member that I appreciate you looking after the residents of Sarnia-Lambton, but from this side we have the responsibility of looking at this major sector of our province, and of our economy as well, if you will, Madam Speaker, from a wider provincial view.

He does mention closing the jail in Sarnia. With Sarnia, I think he knows very well that the decision has been taken into consideration—and also the Walkerton and Owen Sound facilities. I'd like to tell the member that the Sarnia facility itself is over 50 years old. And while it's costing us—I can see that he agrees—about \$180 a day, it is to maintain our inmates in perhaps a better, modern facility at about \$125 a day. There is a 30% savings.

Speaking of Owen Sound, this is a facility that was built in 1869, just immediately after Confederation. We have there 36 inmates. The cost there is \$293 a day, versus \$123 a day in a better, newer, more modern facility. The same goes for Walkerton, where this facility was built prior to Confederation, in 1866. It has 34 occupants at the moment, at about \$280 per day, versus \$125 in another, modern facility. The fact is that at all of these facilities the government is faced with a major renovation investment to bring them to certain standards. But that wouldn't mean that we would be lowering the cost for accommodating inmates at those facilities.

The facility in Windsor, for example, which I think the member has mentioned, is modern, newer, and the

occupants can be housed in that facility at 30% less. I don't have to tell the member that nowadays 30% is a lot of money that can be used for health care, which we hear so much about, education and other areas as well.

I don't have to tell the member either that under the previous government, if my recollection serves me well, they had closed between 16 and 25 facilities. Why? In the name of restructuring. I think we want to do the same thing, but we have to give consideration that we are protecting those 76 jobs as well. The minister has ad-

dressed that. It is the intent of the government to see, indeed, that those jobs are offered to those 76 employees in other facilities in Ontario.

I do hope that the member understands, and we can move on with restructuring our modern facilities.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1835.

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Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
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Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
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Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
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Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
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Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
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Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 21 April 2011

Jeudi 21 avril 2011

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 21 April 2011

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 21 avril 2011

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 151, An Act to enact the Ontario Forest Tenure Modernization Act, 2011 and to amend the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994, the Standing Committee on General Government be authorized to meet on Wednesday, May 4, 2011, during its regular meeting time for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the clerk of the committee shall be noon on Tuesday, May 3, 2011. On Wednesday, May 4, 2011, at no later than 5 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. The committee shall be authorized to meet beyond the normal hour of adjournment for clause-by-clause consideration on Wednesday, May 4, 2011. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession, with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Thursday, May 5, 2011. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on General Government, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called that same day; and

That, when the order for third reading of the bill is called, one hour shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question ne-

cessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That the vote on third reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Phillips has moved government notice of motion number 57. Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I don't know where to start, actually, because this is the most tragic event that has happened this year. In fact, this day is a bad day: Not only are the pages experiencing their last day here at Queen's Park, but you're witnessing another time allocation. What that is is truncating the whole system of democracy. It's cutting off debate. We call it the guillotine motion. It's decapitating the whole purpose of parliamentarians: to speak on issues. It's also a signal, a very profound signal, that Premier McGuinty has lost his way. He has lost respect, I believe, for the people of Ontario—perhaps even for this very precinct. It is most troubling.

In fact, yesterday when I read the paper, I found another sign of this slippery slope we're on: when they announced another price increase for energy. Where is it going to end? It's almost like having someone standing with their foot on your chest. I can hardly breathe.

When I look at the bill—this time allocation, government notice of motion 57. It has been used so many times now that we almost know the motions are there for almost every bill to time-allocate it, which cuts it off. It's routine procedure. But Bill 151 is at the very heart of this. I'm waiting—because there's such limited time. Usually I have an hour, but it's such limited time here to actually get to the point. This is really about northern Ontario being ignored by Premier McGuinty. I should point out that today—this very day, as I speak, Thursday, April 21—our leader, Tim Hudak, is in northern Ontario listening to the concerns of people in northern Ontario. Our leader Tim Hudak is listening.

What was the whole problem with Bill 151? Premier McGuinty would not allow this House to go to the north to hear the people's concerns. They have trouble with the forest industry; we know that. Part of it is because of the price of electricity. Part of it is the price and the HST and the GST all combined into an enormous tax grab, and there is where our leader is, listening to the people who are at the very heart of this time allocation motion.

I know that the speakers who are lined up this morning, I think on both sides of the House—and I can only

speak for our member from Leeds–Grenville. He knows. He participated in the debate on that bill, the very Bill 151 at the heart here. They put forward amendments, and I know that the member from Timmins–James Bay did as well, from the NDP. We worked side by side for the people of Ontario. Who was missing? The people from the other side, Premier McGuinty's side of the House. Somehow, at the end of the day, they have lost their way on representing all of the people all of the time, as fairly as possible.

I don't blame it entirely on him. I understand that the economy is in trouble. But who has had his hand on the tiller for the last eight years? Premier McGuinty. He can't blame Stephen Harper, which he tries to do every day. He can't blame Tim Hudak: We've been here arguing on behalf of the people of Ontario.

In the last couple of minutes I have, because I want the member from Leeds–Grenville to have the most time today, which is very generous on my part—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: —and it's actually surprising as well. But anyway, one of the papers that I read fairly regularly is the Working Forest—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): You know what I'm going to say.

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, you're giving me a chance to get a second wind there.

The Working Forest is a very widely-publicized paper. It's not a prop. It's made from pulp from northern Ontario—what can you talk about here?

This article is about wood supply. Here's another error that has been made. It's a false announcement, technically. They announced on January 31—that is, Premier McGuinty. This isn't personal. This is just simply a case where the Premier has lost his way.

Listen to the people. They'll always tell you what's on their mind. He's stopped listening. In this announcement here, they announced that the Atikokan Renewable Fuels plant was going to be making wood pellets, basically. Eventually, the plan to close the coal plants and replace the coal plants. The fuel would then become wood pellets.

0910

Now, wait a minute here. Who are we kidding? Wood pellets: What is wood? Wood is carbon, basically. Trees store carbon dioxide; that's how they grow, basically. It's a little more complicated than that. When you burn it, it releases the carbon. So they're replacing coal with wood. I think that's a step backwards, personally, yet they're investing money.

But this is what Mayor Lee Kennard from Ignace says: "Ignace still has a skilled workforce.... We've lost workers who continue to maintain a house in Ignace and a house in Thunder Bay or in other parts of the country. We need the provincial government to make a decision...."

"Despite the recent announcements, many people in the existing or potential biomass sector are frustrated with how slowly the provincial government is releasing" the money and getting on with the project.

Really, this time allocation this morning—I've made my point. The Premier is refusing to meet with the people of Ontario. Tim Hudak is up there, along with Randy Hillier from our side, who's the critic on this file. They are listening to the people of the north.

This is a time allocation motion shutting down debate on the very essence of northern Ontario, and it's an insult to this House.

With that, I'm going to pass the baton to my good friend from Leeds–Grenville.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've got to say, I'm not happy to be participating in this debate. Normally, I start my presentations in the House with how glad I am to debate this issue. But I've got to say, right off the top, I am not happy one bit as a northerner and I'm not happy one bit as a legislator to be debating a time allocation motion on a bill such as this. The government says they're really good at consulting. Well, if you're so good at consulting, why do you have to use time allocation to stop debate on Bill 151?

I just think that this government, quite frankly, has got it wrong. I think the people in northern Ontario are mad, and rightfully mad. I think that the government, in the next election, is going to have themselves all kinds of problems in ridings where they thought they might have been safe to where I think, quite frankly, they're going to be finding they have a heck of a race on their hands and, in some cases, they're going to have some losses they weren't expecting. Why? Because this government has decided to not pay attention to northern Ontario, as other governments have done in the past.

Previous governments—and I'm not going to go into the different brands, because all three parties were there in government: New Democrats, Liberals and Conservatives—have always had an approach in the past that you have to pay some attention to the north. Why? Northern Ontario happens to be two thirds of the land mass of Ontario. We may not control all of the seats—we're only 10 seats in northern Ontario—but almost two thirds of the land mass of Ontario is the north.

The second part is that northern Ontario is extremely important to Ontario's economy. Mining and forestry, which are the mainstay of the economy of northern Ontario, don't only generate jobs and wealth in northern Ontario; they generate all kinds of jobs and wealth in southern Ontario.

Take a look at what's going on right now with the stock merger issue on the TSX. We know that here on Bay Street the majority of the people who work in the financial sector here in downtown Toronto are directly related to the mining industry and what needs to be done to list stocks and sell stocks and to do the kinds of things you need to do in order to get mining companies up and running. A lot of the headquarters are here. My God, even the Australian exchange has a headquarters here in Toronto, because we are the mining capital of the world.

When northern Ontario doesn't do well, my friends, the rest of Ontario doesn't do well, and that's what this

government doesn't seem to understand. They say, "Well, look, things are going well in mining." My God, \$1,500 gold. You don't have to be too bright to make money at 1,500 bucks. The mining sector has a lot of bright people in it. I come out of the gold sector; I used to work in the gold mines back in Timmins in the days when the price of gold was \$300 an ounce. At \$300 an ounce, with substantially less costs than there are today, we were having a hard time trying to turn a profit. If the gold sector is doing well, the government can't say, "Oh, it's all because of what we've done." It's because of the commodity price; we're up to \$1,500. As they say in mining terms, everything is waste until you can make money with it, and then it becomes ore. I tell you, there's a lot more ore in northern Ontario than there is waste in these mines, and there's money to be made.

If you take a look at the forestry sector, it's the opposite. We've lost 30 mills across northern Ontario; mills that have shut down, in 30 communities. Actually, no, it's 30 communities that have lost mills; there are more mills than that. I've lost at least four mills in my riding alone. If you take a look at what's going on in the forest industry, it has been a basket case. People in northern Ontario are upset. They're saying, "Listen, we understand that part of what is going on in the forestry sector and what was happening in mining"—not so much anymore—"is cyclical and is also tied to what's happening with commodity prices. We understand that. We've been at it for a long time in northern Ontario. For 100 years we've been mining and we've been into forestry activities of different sorts. We've been very good at it, and we've been competing with the world quite successfully. But we also understand that government policies are able to assist when you're having sectorial problems when it comes to your particular industry."

When the McGuinty government came to power in 2003, I remember the battle cry back then, as it just started. We were seeing all of these mills that were very profitable and that were making lots of money, and that the market in the United States when it came to the sale of lumber was quite strong. We were making money.

Then we started seeing the market drop, because we all know what happened in the United States with housing starts. We're now below a million housing starts in the United States, something that's unprecedented. You'd never seen that in the history of the United States. We're down in housing stocks in other nations as well. We started seeing the commodity price drop and the demand drop, and what ended up happening was that a lot of these mills were having a hard time trying to make money.

People understood in northern Ontario that there would be tough times, but we had gone through those tough times before. We weathered the storm because governments were there in order to assist. For example, I was a member of a government in 1990, in the NDP government of 1990-95, who went through a similar downturn in the forestry sector. We had mills in Kapuskasing that were going to close down. We had mills in Sault Ste.

Marie; we had mills in Thunder Bay; we had mills in Sturgeon Falls and Timmins and different communities that were facing similar challenges. And the government said, "Listen, let's sit down with the communities and let's sit down with the forestry companies and the unions and figure out what has to be done."

We took a bunch of different approaches. In some cases, where the employers said, "Listen, we don't have enough money. We cannot afford to continue operating. We want out, or we're going to have to declare bankruptcy," we restructured the ownership. In some cases, we ended up with worker ownership, in places like Kapuskasing, in places like Sault Ste. Marie, in places like Thunder Bay, where we got the workers to come to the table with their union. We found a new buyer. We sat down. We brokered the deals.

Yes, we helped finance it to some degree, and those companies were then able to deal internally with their cost structure. They were able to say, "Okay, what do we need to do on the wage and benefits side for a temporary period in order to weather the storm?" And the unions knew what to do. To these people who think that unions only negotiate increases: Listen, when the market is bad, unions know what to do in order to save jobs.

But the point is, we empowered the communities. We empowered the unions to do what had to be done so that we were able to weather that storm. Then when the storm ended, the northern Ontario forestry sector took off like gangbusters. It was booming like we had never seen before. Why? Because the government of the day—in this case, the NDP government—actually sat down with people, consulted and did what had to be done in order to be able to deal with the issues that that sector was facing.

What we have now is a Liberal government who have been in power for the last eight years, who have said, "You know what? We're going to have to let the private sector work this out. The forest companies know what to do, and we've got to let them work it out themselves." And then what they ended up doing on top of that was that they changed the electricity policies in this province. It was started by the Conservative government, but the Liberals took deregulation of hydro and the privatization of hydro to lengths that are unprecedented in the history of Ontario.

As a result, we have doubled the energy prices in northern Ontario. So a lot of those mills that are very energy-intensive, especially the pulp and paper mills and refineries and smelters, like there used to be at Xstrata in Timmins, found it harder and harder to make a buck. They closed their doors, and the government response here was hardly a whimper. They said, "We've got the northern Ontario energy program in order to assist the private sector with their energy costs," but nonetheless, even with those programs, the price of electricity is still more expensive in Ontario than it is in Manitoba or Quebec.

If you are Domtar or Tembec or any one of those national or multinational forestry companies and you decide that you have an operation in Ontario, where the

price of electricity is more expensive than an operation you may have in Quebec and Manitoba, it's a no-brainer where you're going to put your money to invest in modernization and to bring your plant up to the latest standards as far as the technologies of those plants. It's going to be where your costs are lower.

0920

This government, for whatever reason, has decided to take a laissez-faire approach; let the private sector do what it must as an approach to what goes on in northern Ontario.

I look at Mr. Brown going like this. I've got to tell you, Mr. Brown, you're going to be shaking your head after the next election. That's all I can tell you.

People in northern Ontario expect their government to come to the table. They expect their government to be at the community meetings and to be at the meetings that have to take place between municipalities, private sector employers, unions and others in order to come up with solutions. The government, basically, did hardly anything to deal with the cost of what's going on in forestry. They said, "The answer is, we're going to offer money to companies to be able to invest in their plants." Well, they were so far in debt, it wasn't a question of adding debt that was the problem; the question was, they needed to find a way to reduce their costs. The government, I would say, failed at it, and I think the people of northern Ontario understand that quite well.

Then here's the kicker—and this is where it comes down to Bill 151. When the mills started to close down in northern Ontario, one of the first ones was in my riding, Excel lumber in the Tembec plant in Opasatika. The company shut the plant down and the community said—rightfully so, and all of the regional communities and myself took the same position—that if Tembec was to shut down its mill, the government should take the wood back and make it available to the community for a successor employer. At the time, it was Mr. Ramsay who was the Minister of Natural Resources, and he took his direction from Dalton McGuinty, because Mr. McGuinty, the Premier of Ontario, has a laissez-faire approach to economics in Ontario. So they took this position: "You know what? This is only a short-term, cyclical thing. We're not going to take the wood back. We're going to leave it with the companies because they're going to need that wood to reoperate mills when the sector comes back, and rather than having five or six mills, they'll go down to one or two super mills and all of that wood will get cut and transported to some super mills in northern Ontario."

I, along with other community members, said, "No, that's completely the wrong approach. Yes, it might be advantageous, to a degree, for the private sector to operate fewer mills but larger mills, but when it comes to the communities where those mills operate, there are going to be lots of losers and there are going to be few winners." And that's what the communities understood.

The point is, you can still make money. I look at Ben Lecours, who is running Lecours Lumber up in Calstock. He's an individual operator who is still making—well,

he's not making a lot of money in this market, but he has one of the mills that is still operating. It shows that small independent operators—and he's not exactly small; he has 300 people that work for him when they're running full out—are able, quite frankly, to do well as independent operators. It made no sense for Calstock or Hearst or Opasatika or Kapuskasing or Smooth Rock Falls or Cochrane or Kirkland Lake—and the communities go on—to go to super mills.

So this government didn't take the wood back, and I, along with a whole bunch of other people in northern Ontario, said at the time to Minister Ramsay, "Hey, listen. You guys are wrong. When that mill shuts down, the first thing you should do is take the wood back, and then say to the community, 'This is your wood. Go out there and try to find somebody who is interested in using the wood in some form of operation that will create employment in your community.'" And yes, it may not have happened right away with what's going on in this forestry downturn, in the cycle in forestry that we see now, but certainly communities would have been positioned to do something alternative when it came to the use of the wood, or they'd be in a position, when the economy did come back, to know that they could have a successor employer. For communities like Opasatika and Smooth Rock Falls, they really got the short end of the stick, because the government refused to do that. Let me give you the story of the two communities.

Smooth Rock Falls, when they lost the old Abitibi mill—which is a Tembec pulp mill—they lost essentially about 800,000 cubic metres of wood. There was a directive on the licences in surrounding communities that they'd get 800,000 cubic metres of wood in the form of chips. What the community wanted, and what I asked for, was that the government needs to make sure that there's an equal allocation of timber to that community for the future.

So they went out and said, "Okay, what can we do?" Their first proposal was that they found somebody who was interested in starting up a cedar mill in Smooth Rock Falls, something we don't do a lot of in Ontario, where there's good potential. They found the investor. They came to the table with the money and said, "Government, Mr. McGuinty, can we have the wood?" And they said, "No, you can't have it. We're not prepared to go through a redistribution of the resource," and that particular project died. It would have created some 60 jobs in that community.

Then they said, "Well, okay, the government announced they want us to move to use biomass in the forest"—taking the tops of trees and the waste wood and some of the chips and converting it into fuels or converting it into heat in order to make energy. So Smooth Rock Falls and Opasatika went out and were quite aggressive in trying to find people to invest in their communities to be able to go forward with those particular projects. I'll talk about Opasatika in a minute.

Smooth Rock Falls went out, they basically got everything they needed, and they found yet another investor

who was prepared to invest in their community. But the key was to get the wood. The long and the short of the story: They spent all kinds of money in Smooth Rock Falls to get to that point, they go to the Minister of Natural Resources at the time, again, Mr. Ramsay, and they said, "Can we get the allocation of wood? We're ready to go." And the government refused to reallocate the timber. That was wrong. That wood should have been set aside for the community so that if they can find a successor employer, they're able to get a project going based on the wood that would be allocated to the community.

Opasatika is even worse. This is one that really drives me off the deep end. I've got to tell you, the former mayor, Donald Nolet, and the rest of the community members who worked on this project are just fit to be tied. Here's the deal: The government says, after a bunch of meetings and encouraging them to do a biomass project, "Listen, don't come to us for the wood; go to Tembec or somebody and do a business-to-business relationship where you're able to get the wood through an allocation from the licence of an existing operator."

That's a very hard thing to do because the reality is, if I'm Tembec—and I understand this—I'm not necessarily excited about having to negotiate use of my timber because, at the end, it really gets in the way of what I've got to do as a business. They are not in the business of starting up other businesses and doing value added; they're in the business of producing wood for their own mills.

Nonetheless, Opasatika went to the various licence holders, and they ended up with Hearst FMA with an agreement for 100,000 cubic metres of wood. That was pretty significant. Opasatika now had an allocation of 100,000 cubic metres, so they were in the ballpark.

With that 100,000 cubic metres, they were able to get an investor to come to the table who said, "Listen, I'm prepared to invest in your community. On 100,000 cubic metres of wood, we can go ahead with phase 1 of the project by using 100,000 cubic metres of waste wood, and we're going to use that to convert that into energy and/or make some biomass fuel. Then we can work on expanding the mill by getting more wood. If there's a reallocation of wood, we can then get ourselves up to 300,000 or 400,000 cubic metres of wood." Here they were, ready to go.

So the government now, Mr. Gravelle, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines—whom I have a great amount of respect for, I have to say on the record. He basically started an RFP process for underutilized and unutilized wood. At the time when the government announced that, I said that was a good thing. I had been pushing the government, along with communities in northern Ontario, to go through a reallocation process because, up to that point, the government was saying, "Oh, no, we don't have the authority because the act doesn't allow the minister to redirect the wood." I used to say, "Poppycok. Of course the act allows you to redirect the wood." And they said, "Well, how do you know?" I said, "Because I was there when we drafted the legislation." It was 1992 or 1993. I sat on the committee that

drafted it. I was on the cabinet committee. I remember darned well what that legislation was all about, and I remember the conversations about what we wanted in the bill and how it ended up at the end when it was finally voted on here at third reading. I argued, along with others, that the minister and the crown had the right to reallocate timber that was either not being used on an existing licence or was being underutilized; in other words, species that were not being used on an existing licence.

About two years ago—I forget the exact date—Minister Gravelle announced one of the largest reallocations of timber in the history of the province of Ontario, which proves the point that we were right in the first place. The government did have the right to reallocate that timber. I was hopeful, when that announcement was made, that we would then have a process where communities really were in the driver's seat so that the Smooth Rock Falls, Dubreuilville, Terrace Bays and Opasatikas out there would be able to go forward and say, "Here is our request of what we want to do with timber. It's sort of a community forest model so that we're able to get the timber in order to do what has to be done in our communities."

0930

The government went through the reallocation process, and what did they do? First of all, before they even made the announcement, the government took back the 100,000 cubic metres of wood that was negotiated by Opasatika from the Hearst FMA. This was after an agreement was signed between the parties. After the Hearst FMA had signed with the entity from the community of Opasatika a contract on 100,000 cubic metres of wood, the government took the wood back.

I said to the minister of the day, "Why are we doing that, Mr. Gravelle? These guys have actually got a use for the timber. They did exactly what you guys asked them to do, which was to spend a lot of time and a lot of money to get an agreement with the Hearst FMA to do a business-to-business relationship on the wood, and now you're taking the wood back." I was told, "What they could do is, they could apply for the wood, and they should be okay." Can you imagine what the investor said? "I've been at this now for two years," says the investor, "and I can go back and start all over again? I've already spent in the hundreds of thousands of dollars to get this far, and now the government of Ontario has changed the game on me. They told me, 'Here are the rules; here's what you have to do in Ontario to start a plant. And all of a sudden, they change the rules.'"

It's a little bit like what the government did with De Beers. De Beers went and built a \$1-billion diamond mine in my riding, and after the fact, when the mine was about to start up, they changed the royalties on the diamonds. It drove the company crazy because they went and sold this project on the basis of how profitable that place could be, and one of the issues that they sold it on is that Ontario—and Canada—is a stable place to do business. My God, how stable can we be when we change the rules after the fact? That's what they did to

the community of Opatatika. So the investor walked away and said, "No, I don't have the money or the time to go through this all over again."

It ended up taking another two years before the government did the allocation of timber. And did Opatatika get wood? Did Smooth Rock Falls get wood? They didn't get a tree, because the government's allocation process was flawed. So what we ended up doing was, we went to communities—

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Huh.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The parliamentary assistant says, "Huh, huh." Talk to the people of Dubreuilville. Go talk to the people of Wawa. See how they feel. You go into those communities and say, "Huh," and you'll see how far you're going to get.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: It's you I'm saying that to.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Don't say "huh" to me, because I'm saying exactly what the people of Dubreuilville and the people of Wawa are saying. They're saying, "Here we were. We had mills that were idle, that were shut down because of what has happened in the economy." In the case of Dubreuilville, they were ready to partially reopen this summer, and the government basically took 200,000 cubic metres away from them, hamstringing them from being able to reopen. A flawed process? Darned right, a flawed process. Are people mad? They are hopping mad.

In the case of Wawa, the Jager mill that opened but 15 years ago, they basically lost all of the wood. The frustrating part is, Wawa is trying to find a buyer for the mill, and the condition of being able to buy the mill is what? You have to have some wood tied to it, and the government took the wood away. You left Wawa high and dry; you left Dubreuilville high and dry, and Sioux Lookout, and the list goes on. And you wonder why people like me are coming to the Legislature, upset with you guys? Because you're killing northern Ontario. It's a great place to live. I want to continue living there, and I want my kids and grandkids to live in northern Ontario. And a Liberal government is going to make sure that they scoot from northern Ontario, because there will not be the jobs if we follow the policies of this government.

I can tell you, after the next election, there are going to be some changes—huge changes, if we form the government of Ontario or if there is a minority government.

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You guys can laugh all you want. Take a look at your polls federally and see how you're doing. My God, what arrogance the Liberals have, I must say. What arrogance. Arrogance: That's all it is.

In the case of Wawa, in the case of Dubreuilville, here are two communities who are trying to either have somebody purchase the plant to restart it or have a plan to restart it, depending on which community we're talking about, and the government took back the wood.

The government says, "We have an answer: We're going to introduce Bill 151." Bill 151 essentially deals with the allocation of timber and the pricing of wood. Here's what's going on now: Communities have been

asking for a community forest model. That's what the community of Hearst and others have been asking for. I recognize that, for some people, that's difficult to accept. The larger forest operators, if you talk to them, don't want the community forest model; I understand that. But from the community perspective, they're saying, "We need to find a balance between the need to ensure that the large corporations like Tembec don't have their licences and wood taken away from them"—and if there is wood left over, underutilized or not utilized, communities are saying, "We'd like to have a community forest model." There are already examples of where we do that in Ontario, to a degree.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, Westwind, and also Algonquin, to a degree.

So it's not something that we've not done in this province. It has been around for a long time, except we've only done it in a few places.

Communities have said, "We want to engage in this Bill 151 dialogue." The government consulted—and I'm putting it on the record—quite effectively when it came to the pre-introduction of the bill, in what they call the white paper, or what we should put in the bill. The government did travel across all of northern Ontario. They held multiple meetings, without a doubt. There were lots of people who showed up. There was lots of dialogue. I don't deny that for a second, because it is true.

But here is the problem—and I'm going to speak about two or three different issues, because in Bill 151, there are three issues: There is the community forest issue, there is the licensing issue for large companies, and then there is the whole issue of pricing the wood, and I'll deal with those separately.

On the issue of the community forest, people were saying to the government, "What we want is a community forest model." The government then came out with these LFMPs, once the legislation was drafted, and everybody said, "What? We didn't talk about wanting LFMPs."

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, they're going to have a couple of pilots: one in the northwest and one in the northeast.

The problem with the LFMPs is simply this: It doesn't deal effectively with the underutilized, non-utilized wood. If you really engage in a community forest model process, you really need to go that way. You really need to say, as the crown, as a policy, that if an existing mill doesn't use its wood and is not able to use its wood, it's going to go into sort of a community forest, and then you develop the structure by which that is managed, which is a whole other debate.

When the communities looked at what the government did in the bill, it is not what they asked for. So when people in northern Ontario said, "We want you to travel this bill now," after second reading, it was because what they had discussed prior to the introduction of the bill and what they saw in the legislation was different. That's

why Mr. Hillier, the member of the Conservative caucus on the subcommittee, and myself said, "We want to at least travel this bill to northern Ontario."

I was at the foresters' association meeting in Timmins last Friday, and Bill Thornton, the head of a division of MNR, was there and said, "Well, the reason that they didn't do it is because the government couldn't travel this bill because they don't travel bills when the House is in session." Well, that is true. But we're going into a constituency break next week—and that's what we asked for. We said, "During the constituency break next week"—and we've done this a number of times—"let's travel that bill to four or five communities across northern Ontario and at least have some consultation in places like Thunder Bay, Timmins, Sault Ste. Marie and down in the Peterborough area"—not Peterborough.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Pembroke.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The Pembroke area. I always get the two mixed up.

We said, "Let's have the bill go out so that people who were part of the discussion prior to the drafting would be able to at least show up and say, 'Okay, here's what's in the bill. Here's what I like about it'"—because there are some people who like what's in this bill, but there are a lot of people who don't—so that the government can go back and try to fix the bill so it reflects what people wanted in northern Ontario. That's why we wanted the public hearings.

In the first place, there was no community forest model, as such, in this bill. What you've got is an LFMP, which is a very different thing.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: LFMC.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: LFMC, sorry. My acronyms are wrong. Thank you very much, parliamentary assistant. The local forest management corporation, LFMC, is a different model to a community forest than what people expected.

The second part is, inside those LFMCs we're going to go to a competitive bidding process for the wood. People fear, if you go that way—there are two or three issues. One is, what happens if, for whatever reason, the price of the wood in a depressed market is not enough to deal with reforestation? The crown is going to be on the hook. And if you truly have a competitive wood system, is that right? I think that's a good question.

Others say, "If we end up in a depressed market of wood and the price is not enough to cover the cost of reforestation, and the government pays for that reforestation, will the Americans see this as something to trigger a countervail against Canada for using government money to subsidize what is a market-based system?" I think that's a fair argument. I'm going to get lawyers who are going to agree with that and lawyers who will disagree with that. But my point is, the Americans will use it as a trigger for a countervail. That's what we're being told.

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The second thing is that what we end up with in a competitive bid system—let's say that the LFMP is in Mr. Brown's riding. I'm just going to make this up.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: LFMC.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: LFMC, okay. We'll put it in my riding then.

Let's say the LFMC is somewhere up on Highway 11, and now you have about five or six mills that are bidding on that wood: Little John Enterprises, probably people out of Cochrane and Kirkland Lake. They're all bidding on the wood. And you've got a mill in Quebec that operates at a much lesser cost. Why? Electricity prices are less expensive. There are government programs to assist those mills in Quebec that we don't have here, and their overall cost is lower.

What do you think they're going to do on the bid of the wood? They're going to bid higher, so that, at the very least, will drive up the price of lumber for Ontario operators beyond what the market should dictate, because it won't be only Ontario operators bidding on the wood; it's going to be whoever wants to bid on the wood. So it's going to drive the price up, and what people really fear is that we're going to see even more wood than we have today leave Ontario and go into Quebec if you're on the Quebec side, into Manitoba if you're on the Manitoba side, or into the northern United States if you're up around the Rainy River area. We're going to see ourselves cutting the trees down, putting the wood on the trucks, and then people in communities that don't have jobs will be waving their jobs goodbye over the border. That's what people fear with the competitive bid system.

Right or wrong, northern Ontarians deserve to be consulted on that part. Whether you agree with me or don't agree with me is not the issue. The issue is that people have raised this as an issue; therefore, the north should be consulted. That's why the committee should have travelled.

On the last issue: Again, in this whole discussion prior to drafting the bill—and I was at some of those meetings—there was not a huge clamouring of people saying, "We want to go to a competitive wood-bidding system." I didn't hear that. I talked to a lot of people who participated at the time, and that's not what they were asking for. They were asking for a community forest model, those who were advocating that.

The third issue, which is the big one, is the issue of the licence to the existing licence holders. To make it simple, a company like Tembec has a licence to operate wood. It's a long-term licence that essentially says, "Here's how much wood you have. It is guaranteed to be yours for a period of 20 years, provided you follow the conditions under the forest management plan." And Ontario has lots to be proud of when it comes to how well we do in reforestation and forest management in northern Ontario. We are world leaders when it comes to what we do in our forests.

I look at forestry like a farming operation. A farmer sows his fields, he grows his crop and he cultivates it once or twice a year, depending on the crop. In northern Ontario, we have a crop, and it's called trees. Unfortunately, it takes about 80 years to grow them, so our crop cycle is much longer, but we manage our forests in a

way that it is sustainable. We are doing the right things. When we go to cut the trees, we plan what effects that will have that would be negative against the environment, against the animals, the people who are out there blueberry-picking or have cottages, or hunters or anglers, and if we shouldn't cut in an area, we just don't cut there. That's the way that it essentially works.

Anyway, back to the point of the larger companies: What we ended up with was that the government, in this case, under this bill, said, "We're going to basically put those licences at risk." What they essentially said in the legislation was that the minister, if he or she chooses, could cancel a licence of an existing operator at the stroke of a pen. You can imagine how Tembec, Domtar, Eacom, AbitibiBowater and OFIA reacted. They said, "Whoa. We're financed on the availability of wood and the sustainability of being able to bring wood into our plants. If you, all of a sudden, say that you changed the legislation, that the minister can cancel my licence, if I go to borrow money in order to do something in my plant—expand, modernize, whatever it might be—I'm going to have a heck of a time trying to raise the money, because I don't have the assets to secure the loan." Because the asset is not just the mill; the asset is the forest.

The government is putting that at risk, so we said to the government—not only I but also the people who presented at committee—that that had to be fixed, at the very least. The government—here's the amazing part: Not only did they not go out and consult northerners on any of this stuff; they drafted amendments, and on the day of the committee hearings—we met at 2 o'clock—we got the amendments at 10, if I remember correctly. So at 10 o'clock, I get a package of amendments on my computer that was, like, 230 pages thick. Yeah, the government is going to say, "Well, we only had five." That's beside the point; there are 230 amendments. I had to take a look. They're saying that a lot of the other amendments from the Conservatives are similar. How do I know that unless I look at it? You have to look at every amendment and say, "Oh, yeah, that's similar; oh, that's different." You've got to decide what position you're going to take on those amendments, because who knows what the Conservative amendment might or might not be? I have to take it seriously that there are amendments that I have to deal with.

I said to the government—I had a motion that I brought to the committee that was supported by my friends in the Conservative Party, and it was simply this: My first motion was, "We, New Democrats, oppose this bill in this form and we will not be providing any amendments to the bill because we don't agree with what this bill is doing." What was the use of my putting in amendments on local forest management corporations if I don't agree with them? Why would I try to amend something that I don't want? Why would I amend a pricing system that I don't want? It made no sense to put amendments forward. So we took the position, "We're going to vote against the sections of the bill that we're not happy

with and we're going to vote against the bill in its entirety." So I put a motion forward to make that clear, why we were not doing the amendments.

The second amendment was saying—again supported by the Conservative caucus, and I want to thank them for that: "We need to go out to communities in order to consult in northern Ontario." We recorded the vote; the Conservatives and New Democrats voted in favour of going out to do the consultation. What did the Liberals do? They voted no. A recorded vote: Mr. Brown and all the other members on the committee on the Liberal side voted no. That's where we were at.

The ironic part about all of this is that Mr. Brown is doing all the dirty work for the Liberal government at committee, killing the ability to have hearings in northern Ontario on this bill, but then he goes back to his riding. Then the local media say, "Well, what's all this noise that we're hearing about how the Liberals don't want to travel this bill in northern Ontario?" "Oh, no," says Mr. Brown. "I don't think bills like this should go to cities. I think they should go to communities, should go to all small communities in northern Ontario, like Espanola."

Mr. Michael A. Brown: And they were heard.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, he says they were heard. Oh, my God. Yeah, you'll be heard in the next election; that's all I can tell you.

The point is, he goes into his riding, he gives the impression to the person who picks up the paper that he is in favour of having public hearings in northern Ontario, and he then comes here and puts the boots to the opposition and uses the majority on the committee to kill any opportunity to have any consultation in northern Ontario by the committee travelling there. He's like the quintessential Liberal. He meets with you and says, "Oh, I'm your friend. You have to know I'm your friend. I'm with you," he says. Then he comes to Toronto and says, "Dalton, what dirty work do you want me to do today?" It's just so ridiculous. Man, no wonder these guys are in trouble in places like northern Ontario and southwestern Ontario and other places—

Interjection: Everywhere.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Everywhere, quite frankly.

I just say that the government didn't want to allow this bill to travel. I think that was rather unfortunate.

So then I said, "Okay, listen. We've just now got these amendments. There are five government amendments on which I have no idea if those who presented to us support the amendments or not. We need the time to take the amendments, call the stakeholders, and say, 'How are you on this, that and the other thing?'" So let's adjourn the committee until May 4, which is the Wednesday when we're back after constituency break."

The government voted for it. Now, you know as well as I do why they did: They didn't want to stay there with 20-minute divisions until 6 o'clock. They wanted to go to whatever reception was going on that day.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: Oh, Gilles, that is just so rich. Give me a break.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, give me—rich. Oh my God, the Minister of Agriculture, give me a break.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: Give me a break, Gilles.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: So here we were—well, that's the truth. You guys voted for my amendment, and I thank you for it. It at least gave me some time to go and do some consultation with the stakeholders who presented in the Toronto committee hearings. But here is the thing: Now we said, "All right." So we get on the phone. We start chatting with people. I expected there was a really strong chance they'd time-allocate, but I thought, "Are they really going to do it? Are they going to time-allocate this bill after they got beaten up on not travelling to northern Ontario?" At the end of the day, there were some signals from the Conservative caucus: They were not going to be holding up the committee to great lengths with those amendments. That was at least my understanding. I'll let the Conservatives clear the record for them. And there was going to be an opportunity to deal with some amendments when we went back on the Wednesday.

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So what if it took a day or two days to do the clause-by-clause? That's not the end of the world. The government still gets their bill. They're going to be here until the end of May. Even if we took a day or two extra of committee clause-by-clause, the government would still get its bill. So the government says, "No, no, we don't want to even be bothered with that. Not only do we not consult the northerners; we're not going to give the opposition the opportunity to ring bells." Man, can you imagine that, if we rang bells in the committee?

Do they know there's a thing called democracy? I hear Michael Ignatieff run around and say, "Oh, Mr. Harper, he's just stifling democracy in Ontario." He should look at his own provincial cousins here in Ontario and get the lesson about how you stifle debate in this House and how you stifle northerners from being heard.

So I'm going to vote against this time allocation motion, and it's no surprise to you. All I've got to say to my friends in the Liberal caucus is that this is very wrong-headed. Not only are you time-allocating this bill, but not travelling the bill back to northern Ontario at the end, I believe, is a huge mistake. It piles on to what people think about you, which is, "You know what? We've made our mind up about Liberals, and we're not voting for those guys in the next election."

That is clear. We're seeing it on the doorstep as we knock on doors across northern Ontario. I've got to say, this government will pay for its actions of the last eight years, for how they've left northern Ontario and a whole bunch of other places in this province behind.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm glad to join in the debate today. I appreciated the comments on our side of the House from the member for Durham, and I know the member for Oshawa will also make a few comments on the record. Like the member for Timmins-James Bay, I will be voting against this time allocation motion, this guillotine motion, as the member for Durham called it.

I was on the general government committee, and I agree with a number of points that the member for Timmins-James Bay brought forward this morning. When the subcommittee came back on March 30, they had clearly left the mandate with the general government committee to provide hearings in the north. And I think, from some of the points that have been made here today and yesterday when we discussed the opposition day motion and comments in committee, it was clear that that was said as part of the consultation—and there was extensive consultation in the north prior to the minister making comments in January.

The minister made a speech up in the north in January, and I think what put people on alert was the fact that what was talked about during the consultation, the white paper discussion, was different from what the minister said and then different from what was in Bill 151 as it was presented. So there was a real call from people in northern Ontario to have public hearings.

I just want to put a little meat on the bones for what the member for Timmins-James Bay—the committee laid out a pretty good plan. It included going to the north during constituency week, which will be next week. It gave ample opportunity to tour Pembroke, Timmins, Thunder Bay and Sault Ste. Marie during that week, to bring it back and then to do clause-by-clause on May 2.

That was completely—completely—removed from the committee's agenda by the parliamentary assistant, the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, Mike Brown. It was surprising, almost shocking, given what happened at that same committee for Bill 191, the Far North Act. It was almost a mirror image of the deletion of northern consultation at that time.

Then when we had the two days of hearings here in Toronto, it became quite obvious that half of the people—maybe more than half—hadn't been given the opportunity to know what the government was bringing forward in terms of amendments. There was a long list of people who seemed to know what was being proposed by the government, how they were going to change the bill that they had circulated, but many did not.

A lot of municipalities that had participated in those two-day hearings, many of them by videoconference, indicated their strong suggestion that there be northern consultation. That motion was gutted by the member for Algoma-Manitoulin; he deleted numbers (2) and (3), and he moved up the days so we didn't have clause-by-clause on May 2.

As with the member for Timmins-James Bay, we were given a package. I brought the package with me, just to get the right record. It was 267 amendments. This was the amendment package that we received early in the morning on Monday, prior to that meeting at 2 o'clock—267 amendments. Now, I understand from the government that they placed five amendments, the NDP one, with the lion's share of the amendments from our caucus—and I apologize: the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington was the lead as our critic in the committee. A lot of our amendments are really call-

ing for northern hearings. If you look at the package that was presented, it includes many of the northern communities that asked us to come to the north—very pragmatic.

In addition, some of those amendments that we put forward were as a result of some of the deputations, the fact that the LFMCS, the local forest management corporations—I know that we affectionately called them, during second reading debate, tree LHINs or forestry LHINs, this other level of bureaucracy. However, during the hearings, there were a number of discussion points about the two pilots that were being started—one in northeastern Ontario and one in northwestern Ontario—and the fact that after we have the review, after they looked at the pilots, there would be a review process in five to seven years.

The one very clear point that the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington made in committee was that when those reviews take place, they shouldn't be done by the minister, in conjunction with the bureaucrats; that this Legislative Assembly, this body of 107 MPPs, should have a role in that review, almost like a sunset review. Those organizations would be required to come back and to provide some meaningful discussion here in the Legislature about the effectiveness of those two pilot projects.

I'm not encouraged by some of the inclinations I get at committee by the government opposite. I think they've lost their way. Certainly, if the Far North Act or Bill 151 was presented early in their term, I have to believe that they would have consulted northern Ontario by having hearings. But I just feel that they are a bit adrift, that their heart is not in it.

I'm just so concerned that northerners still have issues with this bill and still want this process slowed down. And by slowing it down—I know the parliamentary assistant, Mr. Brown, talked about foot-dragging and talked about us delaying. All we were talking about was using constituency week—which is the norm in this assembly when it comes to public hearings—to take that four days and travel to four or five or six northern communities to give them what they want.

But that's not what was discussed on March 30. Mr. Bisson, Mr. Hillier and myself asked, and this is what Mr. Brown, the parliamentary assistant, said on March 30 in the Standing Committee on General government: "We are about to hear, hopefully, two full days of public presentations to us. People can do this. This is 2011. Hopefully, we can do some of these things by audiovisual means, some of them perhaps just by audio. Many will want to come here. Many of the companies that are involved here are not unacquainted with the city of Toronto and the environs. These are very large companies."

Later, when asked by myself and others whether he felt, because second reading debate collapsed, that they were good to go, he said yes. In fact, he went on to say, "I've said what I needed to say. We need to move on. Northerners have had ample opportunity to comment on this." That was the parliamentary assistant.

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But, as was said by Mr. Bisson, the member for Timmins-James Bay, in the Mid-North Monitor that's not the same story that Mr. Brown had on March 30. He changed his story when he got back up in the north. The quote was when the Mid-North Monitor contacted him: "I don't want to see consultations in the cities, that is what I said, because that is not where the people directly affected by this piece of legislation live," explained Brown. "I want to see the hearings go to the communities directly affected by this legislation, places like Espanola." But there was no motion by the member on having hearings in Espanola. There were no amendments put forward by the parliamentary assistant to go to Espanola.

So there was one story here and another when he got back up north. In fact, he talked about the fact that the PCs suggested video conferencing. Well, we did. But when you read Hansard, clearly it's after he moved his version of the guillotine motion by removing those northern travel days, those northern hearings, off the table.

I'm also on the Legislative Assembly committee, where we talked about video conferencing capabilities, where we discussed that room 151, the Amethyst Room, the room that we met in as the general government committee, could easily provide live streaming of the committee. So we talked about that immediately after because we wanted to use Skype and we wanted to use some of the available technologies to help northerners who were guillotined by the government opposite—the government that made sure we weren't going to the north—so that we would give them more opportunity, and that when we had the hearings in Toronto on those two days, the hearings would be streamed live on the Internet, which I think was one of the first opportunities. But when the government advertised the two hearings, they didn't mention that. In fact, when you looked at the website on the day the hearings were on, it was just a small little line right beside the Queen's Park webcast. It didn't talk about the fact that it was being streamed live, that northerners were given the opportunity to log on to the Internet to watch the proceedings, the companies, the individuals, the First Nations, municipal officials. The government did a really crappy job. But that again goes back to the fact that Mr. Brown had one story here and another story up north.

When we met this week, yes, we did the normal little filibuster. We did the 20-minute break here and the 20-minute break there—again, trying to raise awareness. My hat is off to the member for Timmins-James Bay to place those three motions on the floor. I'm glad that he put on the floor the fact that we could have adjourned on Monday, we could have had an immediate meeting of the subcommittee and we could have made a change; we could have righted the wrong that the committee made on March 30. We could have set up the northern hearings, just as were originally scheduled. We could have spent time next week attending those four, five or six communities to address the concerns of the amended bill, because we had the 267 amendments. It would have given us time to stand in the north and talk to them about the amend-

ments, but that wasn't given. The three members—Mr. Bisson, Mr. Hillier and I—voted in favour. The parliamentary assistant, Mr. Brown, and all of the Liberal members—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I've been letting it go for quite a bit but I'd just remind honourable members that we refer to each other by our riding names or titles.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that the member for Algoma-Manitoulin kept correcting me yesterday to call him by his name, so I just took that invitation from yesterday, but I will adhere to your ruling.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: Are you arguing with the Speaker?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm not arguing, Minister, not at all.

So we had the opportunity on Monday to right the wrong from March 30. We could have still visited northern communities. Finally, the government passed the third motion that was presented for us to defer to May 4.

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: And that's right, Mr. Parliamentary Assistant; I'm going to talk about that. That's—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe we don't have a quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I'd ask to see if we have a quorum.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): A quorum is now present. The honourable member for Leeds-Grenville has the floor.

Mr. Steve Clark: Again, we could have, in committee on Monday, righted the wrong. We could have travelled to northern Ontario. I know that the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington did take the opportunity, and I applaud him for that, because he took the time from Monday at 6 o'clock to May 4. He jumped and went up north to talk to people. He has travelled to—

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Is Jack there?

Mr. Steve Clark: No, I'm talking about the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

He has been up in Sault Ste. Marie and Thunder Bay. He has been travelling in northern Ontario, as has our leader, Tim Hudak. Our PC leader, Tim Hudak, the Leader of the Opposition, has also taken the opportunity to travel to North Bay, Sudbury and Thunder Bay. We've taken the time after that adjournment on Monday to go up and speak to northerners about this bill.

I also want to take the opportunity just to talk about a letter that we received on Monday, because I think it's very important to put in the record. It's a correspondence that was copied to members of the committee—at least I received a copy—from the Ontario Forest Industries Association; it's a letter to Minister Gravelle about concerns with Bill 151.

There were five issues that they brought forward in the letter that they still believed that, prior to third reading, there should be amendments to. It goes back to some of the points that were being discussed today.

The first one was something that we heard at committee: the fact that there should be some "inclusion within the preamble of the bill of the background information concerning the aspects of Minister Gravelle's January 13, 2011, announcement, including the initial LFMC limitations." We heard that at committee over and over again, that that initial January announcement by the minister and what was presented in Bill 151 were a bit inconsistent.

Second was the fact that there needs to be "protection measures for validly supported existing and future supply agreements, excepting for the purposes of agreed measured and moderate tenure reforms."

The third one was the amendment that was discussed to "section 27(2) of Bill 151 to include the development of criteria defining 'sufficient and consistent use' within the OFTMA regulation."

The fourth was "the amendment of section 27(2) of Bill 151 to include the development of objective criteria for independent evaluation of various tenure models within an OFTMA regulation."

Finally, "the inclusion of rights of compensation in accordance with the principles of natural justice that are otherwise well enshrined in Ontario law" is referencing Ontario Bar Association correspondence dated April 13 that the committee received.

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So there were still issues brought up by OFIA on Monday. There were still issues that were brought up by the Ontario Bar Association to members of the committee. There are still issues on the table that our party has put forward.

Yes, we are consulting. Yes, the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington is in the north consulting. Yes, Tim Hudak, our leader, is consulting as Leader of the Opposition. They're doing what the government chose not to do, and that's to give us the opportunity to take those four or five days and travel to the north.

Mr. John O'Toole: Four minutes left.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thanks for the time. Thanks for my shot clock—because I know the member for Oshawa wants to speak

We had lots of opportunity on March 30 and April 4, during the two hearing days, and on Monday to provide those hearings. I know that the Ontario PC Party, through our fine critic the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, put a number of very pragmatic amendments to the committee, and you're cutting it off at the knees. So we will not be supporting this guillotine motion, this time allocation motion. We're committed to consulting the north when it comes to Bill 151.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I thank my colleague for the opportunity to speak on this.

As I've said before, as members of the Legislature, one thing we all have to remember is that so long as the forest continues to have value, it will continue to be a forest. As soon as we remove the value of that forest, municipalities and governments and other aspects will find other purposes for that.

The government went on yesterday talking about the 50 million trees it was wanting to plant and move forward. I think they had eight million trees—the minister was out planting a tree. As my colleague from Timmins—James Bay knows, all you have to do is look at the forest industry in communities like Hearst, where they've planted well over 200 million trees because they care about the forest—they see it as the lifeblood of the communities in Ontario.

All you have to do is look around in the north to know where the lifeblood is. It's the forestry sector and the mining sector. It's those mills that employ people. My colleague from Timmins—James Bay mentioned the fact that one community was going to get 60 jobs out of it. Well, in our community in southern Ontario, if they say you're going to get 60 jobs, they say, "What are they doing? Opening a new Lowes?" No, it's opening a community in the north.

The people in the south and some of the individuals across the floor don't understand that this is the essence of what the north is all about. It's understanding how those trees grow and the viability of jobs and the economy. Whether it's the cutters, the truckers and the plants that process the entire material—to get that out to all the people across the province and throughout North America.

Some aspects are quite surprising. My colleague from Timmins—James Bay mentioned the value of the forest to the communities. Last year, I was in Alberta. I always pick up the small papers when I'm in these communities. This is rather interesting. I picked up the paper and they were advocating a cord of white poplar, which is essentially a large-tooth aspen—the poplar that is used by a lot of the mills here. A cord of white poplar was selling for \$450. Let me put that in perspective. About seven years ago, you could buy a tree that last year I paid \$76 for—because I'm building a log cabin, as some members know—it was \$700 for the same tree. To get \$450 for a cord of white poplar in Alberta is certainly more than reasonable, because that's one of the quality woods out there, from the perspective of what they're able to grow, whereas that same tree to the pulp and paper companies may represent about \$15 or \$20. The difficulty now is, that tree becomes very viable in order to cut, process, split and ship out to Alberta at the very prices that they're trying to sell that product at.

Some of the other aspects of this legislation—quite frankly, we're talking about a closure motion here and shutting down the debate, which a lot of individuals, particularly in the north, have concern with, as do we, because we know what it means to those northern communities.

The new local forest management corporations: One of the concerns with that is, what is going to be the

makeup of that? Is it going to be individuals from southern Ontario who are going to come forward and be the ones who are going to be appointed to these boards, to once again make decisions in northern Ontario that don't apply to the north? We have to ensure that these individuals have complete compliance with what's taking place in their communities.

There were a number of locations where community forests were taking place. As the member from Timmins—James Bay mentioned, the Algonquin-Westwind model is one that's working very effectively. Those individuals have a say in which way the fibre is going to flow and what's going to take place.

Quite frankly, a lot of this bill—if you just have a look at what it states in the Working Forest in regard to the number of operators in the particular area—Mr. Brian Nicks, I believe, was going on to say that the number of management units would drop from 43 to about five or 15. That has a lot of concerns, and I know we are concerned very specifically about what's taking place in that aspect.

If you're looking at the number of players in this, the small players in the small communities have a big say in what takes place for employment.

I think, Mr. Speaker, you're giving me the sign that the shot clock is just about over, as the member mentioned, so I will close at that.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being just about past 10:15 of the clock, this House stands in recess until 10:30, at which time we'll have question period.

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Hon. Charles Sousa: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear ribbons in recognition of National Day of Mourning.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm very pleased to introduce the executive of the Probus Club of Streetsville and some of their spouses. Joining us today in the members' east gallery are Lou Pinarello; Phil and Alison Saunders; Harold and Ruth Anne Jaques; Murray Scott; John and Diane Wilton; and Wayne and Loreen Chambers. They're here to watch question period and to get a tour of the building today. Please welcome the Probus Club of Streetsville.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to introduce some guests of mine today. First of all, I have Christine Poland, the mother of our page, Travis Poland; and her brother-in-law, his uncle, Steve Poland, who's also here.

Also with me, for my bill today, Bill 180, my private member's bill, are Lauren Whitwham from Union Gas; James Whittaker from Union Gas; and Jim Douglas from

the Ontario Regional Common Ground Alliance. Please welcome them to Queen's Park for my bill today.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm delighted—we should all be delighted—to have in the members' gallery today Dr. David Hulchanski, who is associate director of the Cities Centre and a professor at the University of Toronto. Beside him sits his daughter, Tessa, from Ursula Franklin school, and beside her sits Mary Todorow, who is a policy analyst for the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario. I'm delighted to have them.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'd like to introduce Dr. Harshinder Kaur, who's in the west gallery. She's from Punjab, India, and is currently visiting my residents in Brampton—Springdale. Dr. Kaur is a crusader for women's rights and has launched an international awareness campaign to highlight female foeticide and infanticide. A consultant pediatrician, Dr. Kaur has held hundreds of free medical camps and has adopted over 300 underprivileged females, providing financial assistance in their pursuit of higher education. Her work is globally recognized and has won her many international awards, including a lifetime achievement award for service towards humanity by the government of Canada.

In addition, Dr. Kaur will be the keynote speaker at this Sunday's Nagar Kirtan, being hosted by the Ontario Sikh and Gurudwara Council. It will end here on the south lawn of Queen's Park.

Dr. Kaur is joined by Tehal Singh Brar, the coordinator of the Punjabi Press Club; Daljinder Singh Puar, a former employee in my constituency office; Councillor Raj Sandhu from Bradford; Jagmohan Sahota; Sulakhan Singh Atwall; Sarbhjit Sandhu; and Harpal Randhawa, who is a small business owner in my riding. Please join me in welcoming them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to introduce Mark Calzavara, regional organizer of the Council of Canadians. Mark and others are participating in a five-day walk from Queen's Park to Shelburne, starting tomorrow, to raise awareness about the environmental dangers of a proposal for a massive open-pit mine north of Shelburne.

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to introduce Dr. Adeli from Sick Kids hospital, and Dr. Zamani, Dr. Madanni and Dr. Khavarian from the Universities of Isfahan and Tehran, sitting in the members' gallery.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It is a pleasure for me to welcome Carl Cosack from NDACT, representing the North Dufferin Agricultural and Community Taskforce. He is also here to participate in the walk starting tomorrow—and, in fact, it's going to Melancthon.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'd also like to acknowledge and welcome to this House Mr. Wayne Chambers, who was my first boss at Royal Bank of Canada 23 years ago.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: April 23 is International Children's Day. With us to help us celebrate International Children's Day are a number of people who began the International Children's Day festivals in Turkey in 1929. First, with us is the teacher of the Nil Academy, Fatih Kirmizci. Then there's Fatih Yegul, who's the executive

director of the Anatolian Heritage Federation, and Ahmet Tamirci, who's the executive director of the Intercultural Dialogue Institute.

Mr. Speaker, as you probably know, this afternoon at 4:30 there's an exceptional reception for International Children's Day, and all members are cordially invited.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: It's my privilege this morning to introduce Peter Price, who is the son of the revered and sometimes feared Carrol Price, who works in the government whip's office. Peter is here with us today, and we're very delighted to have him here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Premier. Premier, you tried to sell Ontario families on your green energy experiments by promising that they would add only 1% to the energy bills that they pay—promise made, promise broken. Then you conceded it would be 46%—promise made, promise broken.

In fact, your list of broken promises has grown longer than Pinocchio's nose on a bad, bad day. You've blown well past your lowball estimate of what Ontario families will pay for your expensive energy experiments. Premier, what is your new number? Is it in triple digits?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Here's something that is in the triple digits: It has been 662 days since the leader of the official opposition has had that responsibility, and they have yet to put forward any kind of a plan on electricity—662 days.

I would again recommend to my honourable—
Interjection.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: If he would pay attention, I would recommend to my honourable colleague that he visit the Ontario Energy Board website. There has been all kinds of talk, of course, about rates and prices and costs associated with electricity. I would strongly recommend that he visit the Ontario Energy Board website.

In the supplementaries, I will speak about the reliable information that we can find on that very site.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Premier, there are less than 170 days till the election. That's the one you should keep in mind.

I can understand that the Premier is preoccupied with the sex ed curriculum since he backtracked on sex ed classes for six-year-olds a year ago. But even a grade 2 student can do the math.

Hydro bills are skyrocketing. The Ontario Energy Board says so in the other 99% of their report that you gloss over. They say that "electricity is costing more.... How we're producing it and the types of generation we're using are costing more." The OEB confirms what every Ontario family and senior already knows: Keep a

defibrillator nearby when opening hydro bills because they are going through the roof.

But the real question is: Just how much more will Ontario families and seniors pay because you refuse to stop your expensive energy experiments?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I welcome the question.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the member from Leeds, who's not in his seat, that if he's going to choose to sit in that seat, he should be sitting there silently.

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's interesting that my honourable colleague, whose questions are always gratefully received over here, refers to our investments in clean energy and our determination to shut down coal-fired generation in Ontario and to clean up the air as "an experiment."

I would ask him to turn to his colleagues the MPPs for Burlington, Haldimand-Norfolk, Leeds-Grenville, Cambridge, Sarnia-Lambton and others whose names escape me at this point in time and ask them, "Why do they keep showing up at our announcements for clean energy jobs in their ridings?" They're doing that because they support those jobs, and they're doing that because their constituents support those jobs.

1040

The people of Ontario want us to continue to pursue clean energy opportunities. They want us to pursue clean energy jobs—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Leeds.

Please continue.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It is clear that the Premier himself has not seen a hydro bill in a good long time. Stop insulting Ontario families by thinking they can be fooled by lame claims that hydro bills have flatlined, and stop ignoring the 99% of the Ontario Energy Board's report that says electricity is costing more, like where they say the increase in hydro is due to "changes in supply mix" and because "costs that contribute to the global adjustment are expected to increase." Note that they did not say "expected to flatline."

The OEB says that hydro bills are expected to increase because of your \$7-billion Samsung sweetheart deal, the Big Becky boondoggle and all those contracts you've signed to pay up to 80 cents for five-cent power. When will you stop insulting families and admit that your expensive—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I would recommend to my honourable colleague that he visit the Ontario Energy Board website and see the sample bill that has been posted there, which shows that, year over year, last

May to this May, and whether you are on a tiered system or the time-of-use system, it shows clearly that it's a wash. It's the same. Bills have in fact stabilized.

Again, I would refer my honourable colleague to statements made by his colleagues. Here's one made by the MPP for Haldimand-Norfolk: "Our area has significant economic and geographical potential for solar energy generation." The MPP for Leeds-Grenville: "Building future jobs in the renewable energy field is clearly the way to go." I would encourage my colleague opposite to speak to his colleagues and get with the system. It's time for clean, renewable energy in the province of Ontario.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Peter Shurman: Back to the Premier: Premier McGuinty is so desperate and so out of touch, he won't give up claiming that hydro bills are the same this year as they were last year. You want families to compare from May 1 to May 1, but if you turn the clock back one day to April 30, it would account for the 36% increase in hydro rates, and if you count the increases to hydro bills that take effect May 1, it accounts for 23% more. That's a 50% increase in just two days. Nice try, Premier. Have you ever even seen a hydro bill? What made you think Ontario families would buy your lame claim that they aren't paying more?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: As the Premier said, I recommend to the members opposite that they have a look at the regulated price plan as put out by the Ontario Energy Board. It's very obvious that they have yet to do that, because this is what it says, and I quote directly from the Ontario Energy Board. This is the province's independent regulator. This isn't us saying it; it's the Ontario Energy Board: that "a comparison of May 2010 and May 2011 shows overall the total bill has remained relatively flat as a result of the introduction of the Ontario clean energy benefit."

Now, they put on their website a comparison of somebody's bills, because what Ontario families want to know is whether the bills have gone up from last year. The answer from the Ontario Energy Board is no; they've remained flat.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Eight years ago, you came to office promising to keep hydro rates under control, but somewhere along the way, you grew out of touch and now Ontario families pay 150% more for time-of-use pricing. You've made such a mess, local hydro companies have begun a rebellion by refusing to install your smart meter tax machines. They hear from Ontario families and seniors who say they cannot afford to pay for your expensive energy experiments. The Ontario Energy Board agrees. It gave Cambridge and Thunder Bay hydro companies a reprieve on installing the smart meter tax machines. Ontario families and seniors get that your expensive energy experiments are driving up the cost of hydro bills they pay. Local hydro companies get it. The OEB gets it. Why can't you?

Hon. Brad Duguid: As I said earlier, Speaker, they can torque it any way they can try to torque it, but the Ontario Energy Board has been very clear. Bills have been flat between last May and this May. That's good news for Ontario consumers. It's bad news for those guys, because it's very obvious now that bills are stabilized in the province of Ontario.

But while bills have stabilized, we're continuing to invest in our efforts to move from dirty coal, which they support, to cleaner sources of power, which we support, to modernize our energy system, which we also support. They want to go back to the old, outdated system. Ontario families deserve better.

We're creating thousands of jobs in our clean energy economy. That's where we stand: with Ontario workers—thousands of clean energy jobs. We're leading the world in this clean energy economy. They want to kill those jobs. Given the choice—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Don't you compare May to May; you compare April 30 to May. Only McGuinty Liberals could be so out of touch to believe that Ontario families will buy that they pay the same for hydro as last year.

Municipalities and local hydro companies see through your phony spin that Ontario families pay the same for hydro as last year. The Ontario Energy Board has already surrendered to two hydro companies that are refusing to install your smart meter tax machines, and 14 more local hydro companies have joined the smart meter tax revolt, including London Hydro, Hydro Ottawa, EnWin and Enersource. They haven't given up on Ontario families, and neither have we. An Ontario PC government will unplug your smart meter tax machines to give seniors and families relief. Why won't you?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The Ontario Energy Board made it very—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The Ontario Energy Board made it very, very clear this week. Year over year, bills are flat. It's good news for Ontario consumers; it's bad news for the opposition, because they just can't make it up any more with credibility.

I ran into somebody on the weekend who happened to run into the Leader of the Opposition at Future Shop. We know that they're against the modernization of our energy system, but the Leader of the Opposition was a little bit upset at Future Shop on the weekend. The reason was that he found out they're no longer carrying the Commodore 64. That's where they're at.

We're for modernization. We're modernizing our energy system, we're cleaning our energy system, we're creating jobs, and we're doing it in a way that stabilizes the energy bills of Ontario families. We're determined to move forward—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Many Ontario families are struggling. They've been hit hard by job losses and flatlined wages and by rising home heating and hydro bills. When they see public sector executives receive secret golden handshakes of hundreds of thousands of dollars or more, it makes them angry. Will the government support the NDP's bill to make government spending more transparent by posting severance payments on the sunshine list?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question from my honourable colleague and the sentiment that informs it. I know that my honourable colleague is going to want to recognize the steps that we've taken—and they have been considerable—to introduce more accountability and more transparency, whether it's expanding the ambit of the freedom-of-information legislation or giving more authority to the auditor to take a look at colleges, universities and hospitals, for example; whether it's the new rules we've put in place, curtailing expenditures for travel and advertising; whether it's requiring the auditor to, in fact, take a look at the books and approve those before we go into the election, so that nobody can ever again hide a \$5.6-billion deficit—no names mentioned.

I think our record reveals that we have done much. There's always more to do, and I appreciate the advice being offered by my colleague.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontarians expect their tax dollars to be used wisely in a time of cuts to front-line health care services, to emergency rooms and to nurses. It's unacceptable for public sector executives, some of whom have been fired or resigned in disgrace, to receive secret golden handshakes of six figures or more. It is just wrong. Why won't this Premier commit, at least, to making these severance payments public?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I was with my honourable colleague in terms of the general direction of her argument, but we part company when she insists that somehow we've been making cuts to health care. There is no foundation in fact for that, and my honourable colleague knows that.

1050

Let me tell you about some of the things we have been doing in hospitals. First of all, as my colleague will know, we've introduced freedom-of-information legislation to cover them. We've given the additional authority to the auditor to take a look at our hospitals. We have new accountability agreements that we're entering into with our hospitals. We have new provisions that require that CEO pay be directly connected to the quality of the care being provided by the hospital itself. We're also making sure that hospitals are subject to the 10% reduction in their executive offices.

Those are all steps in the direction which I understand my colleague would embrace, but again, we part company if she insists that we've made cuts to health care, because we have not.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: If I was this Premier, I'd be asking the people of Port Colborne and Fort Erie whether they think that there's been a cut, considering that their emergency wards are now closed.

This is about priorities. The McGuinty government chooses to secretly hand out hundreds of thousands of dollars to well-connected public sector executives while our health care system suffers. On April 7, the government services minister was asked if he would cap severances. He said, "We are moving towards that. We will do whatever is required to manage expenses."

The NDP's Bill 177 is a small step towards doing that by making severances public. Why won't the Premier commit here and now to supporting it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just want to remind my honourable colleague about some of the things that we've done with respect to health care. I believe we've hired 11,000 more nurses and 2,900 more doctors. We are building 18 new hospitals. We started with zero, and now we have 200 family health teams which are going to care for three million Ontario patients. We have the first nurse practitioner-led clinics in all of North America; in fact, we're putting 25 in place. Ninety-three per cent of Ontarians now have access to a family doctor; 1.2 million more Ontarians now have found a family doctor. Wait times: We didn't measure wait times at all before. Now we've been found to have the shortest wait times in the country.

We're not all the way there yet; there is more to be done. But surely my honourable colleague will acknowledge we are moving in the right direction.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. The Premier likes to talk a good game about openness and transparency, but his actions are anything but. As he prepares to keep severance packages a secret, why is he also sneaking through an amendment to the freedom-of-information rules that would allow hospitals to keep documents from public scrutiny?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I welcome the opportunity to talk about this. The amendment that was included in the budget bill is an important amendment because it protects patient safety. That's what this is all about. We have introduced quality legislation in this House. It received unanimous consent.

We are determined to improve quality across our health care sector, starting with hospitals. Hospitals are charged with a very serious responsibility. They have to report on quality indicators, and they develop annual quality improvement plans so that the public knows that quality is improving in those hospitals.

In the supplementary, I'll be more than happy to talk more about how quality is improving in our hospitals.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Pinocchio virus seems to be spreading over there.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock since the government's going to be interjecting.

One of the challenges, certainly, in the Speaker's chair is trying to focus on somebody asking a question but as well trying to deal with interjections at times. It was brought to my attention that, in trying to deal with a minister and bringing a minister to order, I may have missed a comment earlier that I probably should have asked to be withdrawn, but I did miss it.

But I will ask the leader of the third party to withdraw the comment that she has just made, please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I withdraw, Speaker.

The bottom line is that the Premier and his minister are quickly running out of credibility when it comes to the issues of openness and transparency. They refuse to give the Ombudsman oversight over hospitals. They're allowing hospital executives to pocket sky-high salaries and walk away with six- and seven-figure severances, even when they leave in disgrace. Now they want hospitals to be less accountable to the public than ever before.

When a loved one gets sick and something goes wrong, people simply want answers. Why is this government making sure they won't get those answers?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite might want to make a joke about patient safety, but I tell you that on this side of the House we take it very, very seriously. The member opposite should understand that we're talking about lives. We're talking about people who are unnecessarily dying because quality is not as high as it could be. We're taking action on that.

Tom Closson of the Ontario Hospital Association has described our quality legislation as, "Could be the single most important piece of legislation since the creation of our publicly funded health care system." Hospitals will be required to report on a number of indicators: C. difficile rates, MRSA, VRE, hospital standardized mortality rates, and primary-line blood infections. Improving quality is the highest priority for us right now, and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The only joke is the mockery this government is making out of the idea of transparency and accountability. I have to say that the secrecy in our public health care system that this government is prepared to implement is unacceptable. The minister is not coming clean about the fact that they buried an amendment in the budget bill that puts to waste their idea of FOI in the hospital sector. That's exactly the truth, and this minister knows it.

Ontarians need and demand full transparency and accountability, especially from their hospitals. Why are this Premier and his minister trying to ram through a legislative change that would create the exact opposite? What are they trying to hide?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Opening hospitals to freedom-of-information legislation is not exactly hiding anything. As I said, improving quality in our hospitals is a high priority for us. In order to improve quality, con-

versations about how to do that, understanding where those problems are and what needs to be done to improve quality, have to take place in an environment of confidentiality. Our patients' lives depend upon it. I'm not overstating this.

The Ontario Hospital Association and the OMA did ask for complete exclusion of this information. We did not go that far. We struck a balance. We have an exemption. The IPC can review the requests for information. The IPC is an independent officer of this Legislature. I trust her judgment when it comes to releasing information.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. The Minister of Finance and the Minister of Health have repeatedly refused to answer questions relating to the financial arrangements between the Ministry of Health and Ornge, the organization under contract with the government to deliver air ambulance services. According to Tom Lepine, chief operating officer at Ornge, taxpayers have no right to that financial information. Does the Premier agree with the chief operating officer that Ontario taxpayers have no right to the financial information of an organization that receives millions of dollars from the Ministry of Health every year?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Ornge, of course, is an ambulance service. They provide critical air ambulance services to Ontarians in many parts of this province. In fact, throughout the province we rely on Ornge to get people to the care they need as quickly as possible. Through Ornge we have been able to increase access to emergency medical transportation, especially for Ontarians in northern and remote communities.

We fund Ornge through a transfer payment agreement. We have an accountability agreement with Ornge ensuring that they provide Ontarians with air ambulance services, with base hospitals, with organ recoveries and with air paramedic training certification. They provide over 20,000 admissions a year, which improves health care for Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: One hundred and fifty million dollars are being transferred to this organization by the Ministry of Health every year, and the taxpayers are told they have no right to know how those funds are being allocated. A creature created by the government that claims it is not a government agency, yet it has 116 employees on the government's sunshine list—a so-called not-for-profit organization that has spawned a number of for-profit entities under its umbrella and refuses to disclose financial information.

1100

I'd like to know this from the Premier: How can the Premier ignore the potential for conflict in this organization that receives multi-millions of dollars of government funds while at the same time operating a number of for-profit entities? Can the Premier see the conflict?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite would know that Ornge is a non-profit corporation. It receives government funding. As a result, they are required to report to the sunshine list any employees that make over \$100,000 per year. I understand that they have frozen non-union compensation since 2008.

I'm sure the member opposite is interested to know that the Auditor General is in fact looking at Ornge right now and is doing a value-for-money audit. I know we certainly all look forward to the results of that audit.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is also to the Premier. In Ontario today, tenants who pay for their utilities as part of their rent could still have their vital services cut off if the landlord fails to pay the bills on time. In January of this year, tenants in a three-storey apartment complex, Ellrose Manor in Windsor, had their power cut off in the dead of winter. The tenants paid their utilities as part of their rent. However, they were left out in the cold because their landlord failed to pay their bill.

I'm introducing a bill today that would protect tenants from having their utilities cut off. It's supported by David Hulchanski from the University of Toronto and also Mary Todorow and the members of ACTO, among many, many others in the province. Will this government also support this bill and ensure protection for all tenants in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to welcome ACTO here to the House today as well. We had a very positive, very proactive meeting just a month and a half ago. They are very important stakeholders—partners—in tenant advocacy, and I appreciate that they're here.

I wonder, though, if the member for Parkdale-High Park has told ACTO of her party's record when it comes to protecting tenants in Ontario. They voted against reforms to the Residential Tenancies Act, which doubled fines for landlords who fail to protect vital services. They voted against reforms that provide fairer hearings for disputes through the Landlord and Tenant Board. They voted against reforms to the rent increase—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This from a government who is now in active violation of the United Nations human rights charters and laws when it comes to housing, and has condemnation on their record from the special rapporteur.

To get back to tenants, however: They suffer the consequences of the loss of vital services, which in some situations means being forced from their homes, even though they're absolutely blameless. There's no protection for tenants who are third party victims in such cases.

The minister will know that most of our population who fall into vulnerable categories are renters: elderly, newcomers, those who require support services. Many

live alone or don't have extensive networks of family and friends. Some do not yet fully understand their rights or even English. The loss of vital services in their rental housing can have a devastating impact.

I ask again: Will this government protect tenants in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: First of all, we're very proud of Bill 140, the bill that this House unanimously supported, including the member from Parkdale-High Park.

Just to reinforce: The NDP is the party that voted against reforms to the Residential Tenancies Act that doubled fines for landlords who fail to provide vital services. They're also the same party who voted against \$2.5 billion for affordable housing, which has benefited 680,000 low-income tenants across Ontario. She called our \$1.2-billion investment—at the height of the recession—in affordable housing “crumbs.” I don't think ACTO agrees with that.

We are very, very proud of our record. We will compare our record in advocacy—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Rick Johnson: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, there has been great interest in the microFIT program in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. It seems that there are farmers on every side road who have installed solar systems and are enthusiastically buying into our government's green energy plan. I am told by my rural caucus colleagues that this is happening across rural Ontario.

Could the minister provide the House with an update as to the number of microFIT projects feeding clean, green energy into the grid to date, as well as the economic benefits realized as a result of this program and our government's forward-thinking plan?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock for that question. Indeed, our microFIT program has been a tremendous success. I'm pleased to hear that so many of his constituents are taking an active role in helping to grow Ontario's clean energy economy and build a healthier, more prosperous future for our kids and our grandkids.

I can tell the member right now that over 5,000 small renewable energy projects are feeding clean energy into Ontario's grid, and an additional 5,000 projects have now been green-lighted for connection as soon as their installations are ready.

Many, if not most, of these microFIT participants are farmers, and they're supplementing their farm income with clean energy. That's providing those families with an extra \$10,000 a year, on average. That's a great help to our farming community. It's a great asset to the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Johnson: I'm encouraged by the level of interest in and the success of the microFIT program. I know it's creating good-paying jobs in my riding. So I was extremely disappointed when I received an email from the owner of a booming green energy business. My constituent Mr. Randy Burke of Evergreen Energy Solutions had asked Ms. Laurie Scott, PC candidate, to clarify her party's plan for the microFIT program. Ms. Scott's response in an email was, “We will shut down all of the planned expansion of that unaffordable, unworkable microFIT plan. There will be no”—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind the honourable member to be speaking about government policy.

Mr. Rick Johnson: Minister, my constituent fears that countless good clean energy jobs across the province are on the chopping block, the very jobs that support so many families that her party claims to respect. Can you outline for my constituent and for rural Ontario the impact of such a move on our energy economy?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I think it's very important that the member brought this up today in the Legislature, because we've worked very hard to create jobs right across the province. In rural Ontario and urban Ontario, jobs are being created. Quite frankly, what the PCs are proposing would have a devastating effect on our clean energy—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just reminded the questioner to talk about government policy. I say to the minister: Talk about government policy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, jobs are a priority for this province; they're not a priority for the opposition. The plan of the opposition would kill those jobs—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): You're obviously not listening.

New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Premier: Taxpayers expect us to get answers to the basic questions we've been asking about the financial affairs at Ornge, a not-for-profit charitable organization created by fiat of this government under the direction of a former Minister of Health. The minister's chief of staff now has a senior position at Ornge.

Multi-millions of public assets were absorbed by that organization without public tender. Overhead, administration, salaries and capital costs are paid by taxpayers. For-profit entities are doing business under the same roof, and there is no disclosure of the financial relationship of those businesses.

I ask again: Does the Premier not share our concerns over the potential conflicts inherent in this organization, and will he not agree to ensure that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said in the earlier—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.
Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said in the earlier question, I am delighted that the Auditor General is, in fact, looking at Ornge. I want to assure you that Ornge is co-operating fully with the Auditor General. We are looking forward, as we always do, to what the Auditor General recommends to us. As we have always done, we will respond to the recommendations of the Auditor General. We look forward to that.

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Now we know why the "A" is missing from Ornge: It obviously stands for accountability, and it's nowhere to be found anywhere in that organization.

I want to ask the Premier this: Since this issue was raised here in the Legislature I have received numerous emails from employees, people in administration, pilots and paramedics in that organization giving inside information about what is going on there. Will the Premier agree to personally accept delivery of those emails and will he agree to personally read the content of those emails so that he can know first-hand what is going on at Ornge?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Of course we would welcome that information, and I'm sure the auditor would, too. If you've got information you're willing to share, we're sure willing to accept it and pass it on to the Auditor General. Perhaps you might have done that, actually, yourself—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Perhaps the minister should have been looking into this herself.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Renfrew.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, you know—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It didn't take the member from Renfrew long. I just called him to order. I sit down, he interjects. Your seatmate right beside you wants to hear the answer.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are not going to be taking any lessons on accountability and transparency from the party opposite. They are the party that hid a \$5.5-billion deficit. We passed a law requiring the Auditor General to sign off on the books of the province before the election. They are the party that kept OPG and Hydro One off the sunshine list. We are the party that brought them back on. They refused to include OPG, Hydro One, universities, hospitals under—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

STEEL INDUSTRY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. On March 23, I questioned the Premier about US Steel moving Canadian-processed coke offshore for processing. The Minister of Economic Development and Trade responded, "There is a lot of information that we are not aware of, in terms of resources moving in and out...." And she further said, "We don't want to respond to questions where we simply don't know what the facts are about what the company is doing on-site."

It's been four weeks since the minister gave the response. Does she have the facts and could she now tell us why the Premier and his government have taken no action to stop the removal of processed coke which should be used to produce steel in Hamilton?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I do appreciate the question because our ministry does follow up on a regular basis with US Steel about the situation in Hamilton. The government of Ontario does not have access to the level of detail within operations of a company. We don't know where their feed stock necessarily comes from, we don't track it, we don't know necessarily where it's being exported to, and the government of Ontario does not necessarily track that either.

In this instance, we are very mindful that the Ontario government played every role that we could play in resolving the negotiations that at this time don't seem to even exist between US Steel and its employees. We're concerned because there are hundreds of families in Hamilton who want to work. That's very important to this government, and we want to do everything that we can to help.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: This past Sunday, locked-out workers from Steelworkers 1005 took desperate action that this government should be taking. They braved foul weather to block a ship from taking out Hamilton coke to another site for steel-making, taking our Hamilton jobs with it. The mayor of Hamilton supported these workers, but where was the government?

Why does the McGuinty Liberal government refuse to stop the removal of coke from Hamilton and help these locked-out, unionized workers get back to work in steel plants in Hamilton?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I just want to say, especially to the people of Hamilton, that the local member of provincial Parliament, Sophia Aggelonitis, the people that we've been working with at US Steel—we are determined to play a role that we can play to be helpful. What this member opposite is expecting, I think there is no government level that could possibly be involved in that level of detail within a company, and I don't believe that the public expects that we would.

What's important is that we expect that member opposite's support when we have 300 people hired who used to work at US Steel who were laid off, where we

brought in foreign direct investment by Max Aicher to reopen bar and bloom mills that were closed in 2009—reopened by Max Aicher within six weeks of them landing in Ontario, and 300 new jobs in that community—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Dave Levac: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. A few days ago, I came upon an interesting article in our local newspaper, the Brantford Expositor, which discussed the Financial Times' latest foreign direct investment report, the FDI report. The FDI report stated that for the second consecutive year, Ontario and California have been named the top two destinations for foreign direct investment in North America. This is very encouraging news.

Minister, what does this mean to the average Ontarian? How does being number one in foreign direct investment affect our daily lives, particularly the constituents in my riding of Brant?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I think it is important that every now and then, we have people from around the world who are watching Ontario closely. When reports like the foreign direct investment report that comes out on an annual basis are tabled, all of the world is watching to see who ranks number one.

Let me tell you how proud I am to be part of a Liberal Dalton McGuinty government, where Ontario is ranked number one in foreign direct investment. This province is equal to a great state like California. There's a difference between Ontario—little Ontario compared to big California. Yet here we are ranking number one in the number of jobs that land in our province because of foreign direct investment.

This is critical to the people of Brant, to the people of Windsor, to the people of Sudbury, because it means jobs—real jobs. While the world is still shaking and turning their way out of the recession, we're starting to see Ontario flourish.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Dave Levac: I, for one, am not going to get in the way or mess with the minister when it comes to fighting for jobs in Ontario. I'm just going to make sure that she gets it done, and I want to support her for doing that.

The FDI report certainly shows that Ontario's economy is turning the corner, and it's being done through various investments and strong policy.

Minister, I know that the McGuinty government and, specifically, your ministry and you, have done a lot to get Ontario's economy back on its feet after the 2008 economic downturn. But those tough times are somewhat behind us, and we have to prove ourselves. Now we have to continue to look beyond our provincial government, beyond the national borders, and to expand the livelihoods and the economic growth and prosperity of Ontarians. We need to show the world what Ontario has to

offer. In fact, the economists said that it is crucial that we get this economy moving.

What we'd like to know, Minister, is what you are continuing to do to attract—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I can tell you that for the people of Brant, in particular, having a great MPP like the one they've got is a sure sign of great success in their future, because here's an MPP who works with the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade to land business and to expand the business we have. This MPP, in particular, had a personal role in seeing the expansion of the Ferrero Rocher plant there, which is an expansion of foreign direct investment that landed about four years ago. So it's not just bringing them to Ontario, but it's nurturing them as well; it's showing great, new, better tax policy for businesses here, a business climate where they can flourish, so that companies like Ferrero Rocher continue to expand. In this instance, it is their second expansion in Brantford, largely because of the kind of representation they have in their MPP—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CURRICULUM

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is to the Premier. One year ago, the Minister of Economic Development was Acting Premier. When we raised the concerns of parents who were surprised by your plan to teach sex ed to kids as young as six years old, the Acting Premier stood in this House and gave a very passionate defence of why you definitely were pressing ahead anyway. That was in the morning.

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Three hours later, you pulled the rug out from under her with a backtrack on the sex ed curriculum. Then you sent out the education minister to confess that you hadn't really consulted and you would now do so.

It is a year later. Why is there still no indication that you will consult parents?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: First of all, I think it's really important that I take this opportunity to correct some of the statements that have been made by members of the opposition. I'm surprised that a former Minister of Education would not know that when they were in government, we had sex education in our schools. In fact, some of the things they have objected to in the curriculum are in fact what was in our schools when she was—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): "Aie, aie, aie" is right. Minister?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: It's important that we remind the honourable member of what was in place when they were in government, because you're suggesting that that maybe was not the case.

The other thing that I would remind the honourable member of is that in the province of Ontario we have a process around curriculum review. We follow this process for all curriculum, whether it's mathematics, social studies or sex education. That was the process that was followed with the delivery of the sex ed curriculum that was in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: The issue is consultation. It's like what happened earlier this week when Ontario families suddenly learned that you had only promised to post daycare and serious-incident reports online because you were put on the spot four years ago, and then you said whatever it took to make the problem go away. We know now that that promise was not lived up to; it was broken.

One year ago, you promised to consult parents on the changes to the sex education curriculum that you viewed as a *fait accompli* last year. There is no schedule of consultations, and parents are telling us that they do not see that anything will change.

My question to you is: Why shouldn't they believe that you're waiting until after the next election to bring sex classes back if you're given the chance?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I cannot believe a former Minister of Education is asking to bring back sex education. It has always been there. It has been in our classrooms for 25 years. To stand in her place and suggest that that has not been the case is highly unusual.

What I can say to the people of Ontario: We are committed. We used a process. We did consult. Families told us they wanted us to do a better job—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. New question.

AGGREGATE EXTRACTION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. A US-owned company wants to build North America's second-largest open-pit mine next to the Niagara Escarpment and amidst the headwaters of rivers that provide drinking water for over a million Ontarians. Farmers, citizens, aboriginal people and environmentalists oppose this planned quarry, which will destroy thousands of acres of prime farmland.

The Ministry of Natural Resources is only allowing 45 days for public comment on this 3,000-page proposal. Will the Premier order a 120-day extension for public comment to allow full input from the growing number of concerned citizens?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm very pleased to answer this question. I know that the member from Dufferin-Caledon has raised this issue in the past as she has approached me to talk about it. There has been lots of media concern expressed about this particular issue. I can confirm that the local district office has received a li-

cence application, but I do want to make it clear that this is only the beginning of the Aggregate Resources Act process.

While legally I cannot extend the comment period, I do intend to consider comments outside the official objection period. I would encourage all local citizens who have concerns with this project to become involved and engage with my ministry. I can tell you that I met with the delegation of Melancthon township back in February at the Ontario Good Roads Association and ROMA conference. I know the council is concerned and I want to ensure that their residents' concerns are addressed. As I said, it's the beginning of the process.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Sierra Club, the Lake Ontario Waterkeeper and the Council of Canadians all oppose this proposed quarry. Mark Calzavara of the Council of Canadians and Carl Cosack, a local farmer, are here in the gallery today. Tomorrow, they begin a five-day walk from Queen's Park to the proposed quarry.

There is no reason to rush through a project of this scale. Some 1,300 Ontarians have written to the Premier, urging him to extend the period of public comment for 120 days beyond this Tuesday's deadline. Will the Premier agree to this very reasonable request in order to allow for full public consultation on this quarry?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Even before the application was submitted, I know that the proposed quarry was the subject of significant local media attention, and certainly the councillors were very vocal about this issue. I know the residents are concerned about the preservation of the agricultural land.

The Aggregate Resources Act has a process that gives the applicant up to two years—that would be March 10, 2013—to resolve any objections to the application. As I said, we're at the very beginning of the process. If there are still unresolved objections to the licence application after two years, the Ministry of Natural Resources can refer the application to the Ontario Municipal Board. We're at the very beginning of the process. I would ask local citizens who have concerns with the project to please become involved in the consultation process. I welcome their comments.

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE BOARD

Mr. Bob Delaney: This question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, last fall, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, the WSIB, launched a year-long funding review. It was chaired by respected academic and labour expert Professor Harry Arthurs. The review is expected to be both rigorous and comprehensive. Panel members of the review include former Ontario Conservative Party leader John Tory and former Canadian Auto Workers president Buzz Hargrove. Minister, can you update the House on the progress made on the funding review and what stage the process is at?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The funding review presently under way is a year-long independent review of the WSIB's financial circumstances. The review is to inform the WSIB on a strategy to eliminate the unfunded liability by setting and achieving targets and timelines for full funding.

The funding review panel chaired by Professor Harry Arthurs is holding public hearings to gather expert advice and input from workers, labourers, employers and the public on a range of issues relating to the WSIB's financial future. Mr. Arthurs is hearing from workers, labour groups, employers and the public all across this province. Public consultations are taking place over a one-month period. They began on April 5 and they conclude on May 3.

The WSIB is working to ensure a stable and sustainable system of compensation for injured workers and employers in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: The WSIB plays a key role in protecting Ontario workers and their families through no-fault workplace insurance. WSIB provides disability benefits and assists in the safe-return-to-work programs for those who have been injured on the job. WSIB provides safety incentives to businesses that encourage greater compliance and safer workplaces. That makes this review very important for both workers and employers in Ontario.

Workers and employers alike, both in our home city of Mississauga and across Ontario, are interested in being able to contribute to the outcome. Minister, will everyone who wants to offer ideas and suggestions have an opportunity to participate in the review?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The WSIB has a clear mandate to improve the performance of the WSIB and retire the unfunded liability. As mentioned, consultations are being conducted across Ontario. However, submissions and comments to the Arthurs funding review can also be made online before June 15. Mr. Arthurs will be hearing from more than 100 organizations, such as the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, CUPE, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, CAW Canada, the Employers' Council of Ontario, the Ontario Federation of Labour, the Ontario Mining Association and local injured workers' groups in Hamilton, Windsor, London and Thunder Bay.

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I encourage everyone, including my opposition critics, to take part in this review. Our government will continue to support the WSIB's efforts to create a stable and sustainable system of compensation for injured workers and employers. Ontario's workers and their families need to know that they will be protected.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is to the Premier. Premier, last night at an all-candidates' debate in Sarnia-Lambton, the federal Liberal candidate called your decision, along with your finance minister's, to close the

Sarnia jail "arrogant"—his word, not mine. But don't take my word for it. Turn on CHOK radio in Sarnia today and you'll hear it playing every hour.

I know that you and your finance minister will be door-knocking for Liberal candidates over the next week. Will you please come down to Sarnia and door-knock with your federal candidate down there, who said your decision to close the jail was arrogant?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I thought the questions about the federal election campaign were not appropriate in the House. But I'm always happy—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Minister of Agriculture. Minister of the Environment, who gave me the look. The member from Leeds.

I would welcome, at any opportunity, any one of you to come and sit in this chair and try and find the balance of both sides of the House. It is a challenge to try. I have to listen to a question. Yes, it may start with some federal campaigning, but it does morph into a question dealing with a provincial issue.

My issue has been with some of the questions and answers, particularly the government questions—everyone knows the Speaker has some issues with the government questions to begin with, but that's left for a different day—and starting to talk about opposition policy.

I'd just remind all members that I'm going to do the best job that I can to find the balance and to ensure that there is fairness on both sides of the House.

Minister.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm wondering if the member heard whether there was any concern about the closing of jails in any of these ridings: Cobourg, Haileybury, L'Orignal, Waterloo-Wellington, Parry Sound, Barrie, Peterborough, Guelph, Cornwall, Burtch, Lindsay, Whitby, Brampton, Millbrook and Sault Ste. Marie. Those are all communities in which your government, when you were in power, closed the individual jails, so I'm wondering if in any of those ridings, any of the federal candidates have anything to say about the closing of those jails under your watch. I know that now-Conservative Senator Runciman was in charge of closing them. I didn't hear any concerns expressed by members of—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Robert Bailey: That question was to the Premier, and the minister answered it. It was quite a rendition of history, but that wasn't what I asked for. I wasn't here then.

The McGuinty Liberals say that the decision to shut down the Sarnia jail and ship jobs and prisoners to the finance minister's riding was made three years ago, but no one knew about it: not the Sarnia mayor, not the OPP, not the RCMP, not the legal community and, obviously, not even the local Liberals. Your federal candidate called this decision "arrogant" because—this is a quote from him last night—in the budget: "Surprise, Sarnia, your jail

is gone.” That’s wrong. I couldn’t agree more. The mayor agrees.

The jail employs over 79 people and provides \$6 million to the local Sarnia economy. Why do you think it’s okay to shut down the jail in my area just to save your finance minister’s seat?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I reminded the honourable member yesterday about the term that he used, or a derivative of that term, and I just ask that he withdraw the comment.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: The difficulty for those of us on this side is that during the first half of question period, members of the opposition get up and tell the government that they should be looking for ways to save money. As soon as we find ways of saving money, you don’t want us to save money.

I know that when the Conservative Party was in power, they closed 28 hospitals in the province of Ontario. They also closed several jails in the province. I didn’t hear any complaints then. In fact, Senator Bob Runciman said that it was only common sense to be making these moves—Conservative Senator Runciman.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. This question is being asked on behalf of Mike MacDonald. Mike works for the Toronto Transit Commission. He is the father of three little girls. He has been diagnosed with a rare form of non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma. Doctors tell Mike he probably only has six months to live. But there is a ray of hope; that is, if he can take a drug called Folutyn. Mike has exhausted his life savings to pay for the first round of treatment. What is the McGuinty government prepared to do to help Mike with this fight of his life?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I’m pleased to take the question, and I certainly want to take the opportunity to offer my comfort and support to this family in the challenge that they face. I hope that my honourable colleague has previously raised this question directly with the Minister of Health rather than waiting for this particular forum, but nonetheless the question is here now.

I can’t speak to the specifics of it. I can say that what I do know is that there is a formal drug approval process where we rely on the best advice from our experts as to which drugs we should fund and which drugs we should not. That’s a process that we put in place. All governments of all stripes have relied on that in the past. As I said, I know that the Minister of Health would be very interested in getting more of the particulars of this matter.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: This really is a case of life and death. Mike MacDonald’s co-workers are trying to raise tens of thousands of dollars to keep him on the drug

Folutyn. Mike has worked hard all of his life. He has played by the rules all of his life and now he has been dealt this terrible hand. He’d be here with us this morning but he had to go for chemo appointments. Mike is a fighter, but he needs his government to be in the ring alongside him. Will this government step up and help Mike MacDonald in his moment of greatest need?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I can’t speak to the particulars of a matter raised in this forum. I would encourage my colleague to take this up directly with the Minister of Health, and I will take steps to pass this information along to her.

What I can say is that we are now funding 35 new cancer drugs which have been added to the formulary. In our recent budget, we expanded breast cancer screening for women at high risk, beginning at age 30. Those are 90,000 additional screenings. I can say that there was a recent study made public in the British medical journal *The Lancet* saying that we have one of the highest cancer survival rates in the world, based on the cancer drug regime and treatment regime we have in place in our province.

When it comes to all health care matters, notwithstanding the fact that we continue to make progress, there is always more to do. Again, I encourage my colleague opposite to take up this matter directly with the Minister of Health.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just want to reinforce the comments I made earlier because of some exception that was taken. I’m going to quote from Erskine May, *Parliamentary Practice*, 23rd edition, page 350: “Questions are out of order if they relate to opposition party policies rather than to the government’s responsibilities.”

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like to take this opportunity to welcome grade 8 students from the Minister of Education’s riding, from C.M.L. Snider public school in Wellington. They are here to see their classmate Grace Conroy, one of our legislative pages, in action, and are accompanied by their teacher, Ms. Pauline Jones. Welcome to Queen’s Park today.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Speaking of the pages, I’d like to ask all members to join me in thanking them for their wonderful work, and we wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Have a great Easter, a safe journey home, everyone, and make sure you buy local, Buy Ontario, buy Canadian.

This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1141 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: April 23 is International Children's Day, which we will also celebrate in Canada. With us to help us celebrate International Children's Day are a number of very important people who are from the Turkish community: Mr. Can Yoldas, vice-consul general of the Republic of Turkey; Mr. Yaman Uzumeri, a former chief building official, city of Toronto; Dr. Mehmet Bor, president of the Federation of Canadian Turkish Associations; Mr. Halil Sivri, president of the Turkish Culture and Folklore Society of Canada; Mr. Ilke Hincer, executive director of the federation; and Ms. Yildiz Ünsal, treasurer of the Turkish Federation Community Foundation.

Without further ado, I would like to invite all the members to join us this evening at 4:30 in room 163 to help us celebrate International Children's Day.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BEYOND THE HURT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Today, I would like to stand up to acknowledge the volunteer efforts of Sydney O'Brien, who has been a page in the Ontario Legislature for the past five weeks. I'm speaking about the anti-bullying program she is involved in.

Beyond the Hurt is a program coordinated by the Canadian Red Cross. Working with schools, sports teams, community groups and youth organizations, the primary aim of this program is to build school and community capacity to prevent and respond to bullying and harassment.

Peer facilitators are a unique component of the school-based element of this program. According to the Red Cross, "Young people have a clear, shared vision about what's important to preventing bullying and harassment. One area where students consistently show significant growth is in their understanding of the bystander role, and how critical it is to encouraging or stopping bullying."

Last year this House passed, with unanimous support, a motion making the third week of November Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week.

Bullying in any form, whether physical or emotional, in person or over the Internet, is never acceptable.

For Sydney's ongoing effort and dedication as a peer facilitator with the Beyond the Hurt program, I would like to recognize and commend Sydney O'Brien. Your work is making a difference in the lives of your friends and peers, and we all thank you.

SKETCH

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to take a moment today to give credit to an inspiring organization that is doing important work in my community. Operating mainly in downtown and west Toronto neighbourhoods,

Sketch is an organization that creates opportunities for homeless and street youth to engage in the arts in their community.

Homelessness and poverty are complex problems that call for innovative responses. Sketch maintains that everyone has a right to self-expression and that everyone has a story to tell. As an organization, they have spent the last 15 years helping at-risk youth find a voice through artistic expression. They have managed to do this despite the chronic underfunding faced by so many arts and non-profit organizations in Ontario.

Sketch is the result of the collaborative efforts of many people who help make their programs a reality, including the many youth who help develop their programs. Many personal stories of accomplishments and positive change as a result of Sketch's programs are told by the participants, staff and funders who use and support this unique organization.

I wish Sketch, its staff and participants all the best for a smooth transition to a new location in the Artscape facility on Shaw Street and for the continued success of their programs.

AMATEUR SPORT

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise today to take this opportunity to congratulate Nicholas Mallia and Jesse McNalley on their outstanding performance at the 2011 Canada Winter Games. Nicholas and Jesse are both residents of my riding of Scarborough Southwest.

While the competition was fierce, Nicholas was awarded silver and bronze medals in artistic gymnastics, while Jesse took home a silver medal in wheelchair basketball.

This year, the Canada Winter Games were held in Halifax. The games represent the highest level of national competition for up-and-coming Canadian athletes. More than 2,700 athletes competed in 20 sports, attracting thousands of visitors.

Ontario was able to maintain its prominent status in the games by winning the Canada Games flag for the 19th time.

Ontario is very proud of all its athletes, which is why our government has been committed to investing in amateur sports. Between 2003 and 2010, our government increased support for amateur sports by 162%. By 2010 and 2011, our government is providing \$23 million to provincial sport and multi-sport organizations and other partners to promote participation and excellence in sports throughout Ontario.

Please join me in congratulating Nicholas Mallia and Jesse McNalley, as well as all other Ontario athletes, on their remarkable performance at the 2011 Canada Winter Games.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Throughout the province of Ontario, there is growing concern about the sustainability and viability of the school transportation industry.

The Ontario School Bus Association wrote to the Premier and the Minister of Education on April 7, indicating that they are concerned because there is a “marked lack of transparency and accountability by many student transportation consortia on the process, the scoring and the awarding of contracts to date under the government initiated RFP process.”

They have asked “for information from consortia that should rightly be in the public domain and ... are having a difficult time getting answers.”

They also go on to say that the consortia are “engaging in RFP processes without connecting to the process begun by the Ministry of Education and using documents that are still under pilot status.”

They are concerned: “We had a clear understanding that the ministry would set the ground rules of this transition. That has not happened. Instead, the worst-case scenario is happening.”

So there is a threat to the school transportation industry in the province of Ontario. It's having a big negative impact on the association members and on communities throughout Ontario.

They are calling on “the Premier and the Minister of Education to immediately suspend the RFP process for home-to-school student transportation until such time as there is”—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The member from Brant.

BOB COYNE

Mr. Dave Levac: I'd like all Ontarians to know that June Callwood began her journalism career at BCI, Brantford Collegiate Institute, in Brantford. She was the editor of the high school newspaper. She eventually dropped out of school to work for the Brantford Expositor and went on to lead an outstanding career and life, as we all know.

Today, I honour another Brantford native who now has a direct association to Ms. Callwood, Bob Coyne. The June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Award for Volunteerism recognizes individuals and groups who have made an exceptional contribution to volunteerism in not just Brantford but all of Ontario.

Volunteers help build diverse, vibrant, caring and safe communities. They make this province a socially, culturally and economically vibrant place in which to live, work, play and raise a family. Twenty individuals or groups in the province each year receive this award.

It's my extreme pleasure to inform the House that Bob Coyne of Brantford has officially been awarded this most exceptional award. Bob Coyne has served as a volunteer on many varieties of committees and boards. He coaches and organizes boys' and girls' hockey teams of all levels, is an advocate for the expansion of Brantford's sports infrastructure and participates in many other worthy charities. He has been instrumental in bringing many sporting events to Brantford, promoting Brantford both locally and internationally as a tourism destination.

On behalf of the residents of Brantford, Brant and Six Nations, I congratulate Bob Coyne for his achievements and thank him for his hard work and dedication.

ORGAN DONATION

Mr. Frank Klees: At a press conference earlier today, my colleagues Norm Miller, the MPP for Parry Sound–Muskoka, John O'Toole, the MPP for Durham, and I launched a friendly challenge to double the number of people registered as organ donors in our constituencies over the next four months. We want to extend that same challenge to all members of the House.

We were joined by four amazing individuals who as organ transplant recipients shared their personal stories of how they were given the gift of life because someone made the decision to be an organ donor.

I want to thank Sandra Holdsworth, Bruce Cuthbert, Kelly Thorman-Kleinschmidt and Jennifer Irwin for bringing their personal story to this challenge.

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Today there are 1,500 patients waiting for an organ transplant in Ontario and thousands more in need of tissue transplants. One person dies every three days, waiting for an organ that never comes.

One of the reasons for that statistic is that Ontario lags far behind many other jurisdictions in the number of people who are registered as potential donors. Some jurisdictions are as high as 80%; Ontario is at 17%.

My riding of Newmarket–Aurora is at 20%, and our goal is to double that by September 1. I'm asking my constituents to visit my website at frankklees.com, download a registration form and either deliver that to the ServiceOntario centre nearest them or mail it to the Trillium Gift of Life office.

We're calling on all members to join us in this challenge and to give the gift of life to many who would otherwise be left without.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Kuldip Kular: Of the many great stories in Bramalea–Gore–Malton of late, I would like to share news of how our government is supporting Brampton-based companies, such as BMP Metals.

BMP Metals produces bogies and other precision metal components for Bombardier Transportation's advanced rapid transit and monorail prototypes. These are destined for cities like Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and Sao Paulo, Brazil. The contracts highlight the international demand for transit technologies and Ontario's strength in this highly competitive field. Bombardier was recently awarded \$750,000 through the eastern Ontario development fund to develop its Millhaven testing site.

While touring BMP's Brampton facility, I was informed that programs like the EODF signal our support to the industry. In fact, our investment in Bombardier encouraged BMP Metals, as a strategic supplier, to hire 15 new staff to upgrade equipment, expand its operations

and to work more closely with Bombardier to improve their global competitiveness, and that will mean more jobs in the future.

I would like to thank the Minister of Economic Development for supporting Bombardier's success and also its Brampton partner, BMP Metals, and for her ongoing support to stimulate high-value jobs and investment for my—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

EASTER

Mr. Mike Colle: Today I raise to bring Easter greetings to my constituents and people all across Ontario. Easter is one of the most important religious celebrations in the Christian faith. It marks the end of Lent, a 40-day period of fasting and penance, which began on Ash Wednesday. Today is known as Holy Thursday and is part of Holy Week, which ends tomorrow with Good Friday.

For those of the Christian faith, Good Friday marks the death and crucifixion of Christ. Customs for Good Friday include hymns and prayers of thanksgiving. This day is sometimes marked by fasting and penance.

All across Ontario, there are processions in honour of Good Friday. Many of my constituents will be celebrating the 49th annual St. Francis of Assisi Church Good Friday procession in Little Italy tomorrow. Many of my constituents will also be attending the Good Friday procession held by the St. Thomas Aquinas Parish on Eglinton and the St. Clare Parish on St. Clair.

For Christians of many cultures and religions, Easter Sunday represents the resurrection of Christ and is a time of celebration. In Vatican City, the Pope holds a large service at St. Peter's Square. Many churches around the world hold celebrations on the eve of Easter Sunday, with the lighting of candles.

Easter Sunday is celebrated with family and friends and usually begins with the early morning Easter egg hunt, and then everybody gathers together with a special meal of goat, lamb and ham.

So I wish everybody Buona Pasqua, happy Easter, and enjoy your Easter goat and ham and lamb.

INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S DAY

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Every April 23, the Republic of Turkey proclaims International Children's Day. The very first children's day in the world was celebrated on April 23, 1929. Since then, every year, the children in Turkey celebrate this day as a national holiday. Schools participate in week-long ceremonies, marked by performances in all fields, in large stadiums, watched by the entire nation.

Among the activities on this day, the children send their representatives to replace state officials and high-ranking bureaucrats in their offices. The president, the prime minister, the cabinet ministers and provincial

premiers all turn over their positions to children's representatives.

The importance of April 23 as a special day of children has been recognized by the international community. In 1979, as part of the International Year of the Child celebrations, UNICEF recognized this important day as Children's Day as well.

Canadians of Turkish origin here would like to promote this tradition of International Children's Day within the Canadian multicultural mosaic and make Canada a better place to live for all of our children. To make this a success, we're holding a reception this afternoon to which all members are invited. I already introduced the members of the Turkish-Canadian federation who are here to help us celebrate this event.

Thank you very much, and happy Children's Day.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates on the estimates selected and not selected by the standing committee for consideration.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Mr. Dunlop from the Standing Committee on Estimates presents the committee's report as follows:

Pursuant to standing order 60, your committee has selected the estimates 2011—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Pursuant to standing order 61(b), the report of the committee is deemed to be received and the estimates of the ministries and offices named therein as not being selected for consideration by the committee are deemed to be concurred in.

Report deemed received.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SUPPORTING SMOKE-FREE ONTARIO BY REDUCING CONTRABAND TOBACCO ACT, 2011 LOI DE 2011 APPUYANT LA STRATÉGIE ONTARIO SANS FUMÉE PAR LA RÉDUCTION DU TABAC DE CONTREBANDE

Ms. Aggelonitis moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 186, An Act to amend the Tobacco Tax Act /
Projet de loi 186, Loi modifiant la Loi de la taxe sur le
tabac.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I'll make my statement during ministerial statements.

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES
AMENDMENT ACT
(VITAL SERVICES), 2011
LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA LOCATION
À USAGE D'HABITATION
(SERVICES ESSENTIELS)

Ms. DiNovo moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 187, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of vital services / Projet de loi 187, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation à l'égard des services essentiels.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The bill amends the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, to provide that where no municipal vital services bylaws are applicable in respect of a rental unit, the following applies:

(1) The landlord is required to provide adequate and suitable vital services to the rental unit.

(2) A supplier of a vital service is required to give notice to the ministry before ceasing to supply the service because of a landlord's breach of contract.

(3) Where a landlord has failed to provide adequate and suitable vital services, the ministry may enter into agreements with suppliers to ensure the supply of vital services to rental units and may, in such circumstances, direct a tenant to pay his or her rent to the ministry.

The bill grants the Lieutenant Governor in Council authority to specify that when prescribed criteria are met, an otherwise applicable vital services bylaw does not apply in respect of a rental unit, and the provisions set out in the bill apply instead.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move that the order of the House dated April 29, 2010, referring Bill 12, An Act to

proclaim British Home Child Day, to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy be discharged, and the bill withdrawn.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members have heard the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

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STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

TOBACCO CONTROL

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: Before I begin, I'd like to welcome some of the people from the Ministry of Revenue who are here, including my deputy minister, Steve Orsini, Peter Rzaadki, Michael Coe and Alexandra Moskalyk.

Today I rise in the House to introduce the Supporting Smoke-Free Ontario by Reducing Contraband Tobacco Act, 2011. This is part of our government's commitment to create a smoke-free Ontario.

Today I have the privilege of bringing forward a very important piece of legislation. I'm honoured to announce that, if passed, this act would help protect our youth from the dangers of cheap, illegal tobacco. Our job, as parents and as leaders, is to do everything that we can to prevent our kids from smoking. Low-cost cigarettes are a gateway for young people to take up smoking or to start again if they have already quit. In fact, smoking kills thousands of people a year in Ontario. This is an alarming number, and cause for significant concern.

Our government is taking action. We are the government that has moved to build on the successes of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. When it comes to illegal tobacco, we've met the challenge and we've made significant progress. With the changes that I'm announcing today, our government will have introduced measures in six of the last eight years to reduce the availability of cheap, illegal tobacco in Ontario. In developing these proposals, we have listened carefully to our stakeholders and partners who share our concern and our commitment to address this complex problem. We have asked them for their advice, and we have acted decisively. I believe that this bill strikes the right balance.

If passed, our legislation would increase oversight over the distribution of raw leaf tobacco in the province, ultimately replacing the Ontario Flue-Cured Tobacco Growers' Marketing Board's current system. We're also proposing to license importers to ensure that there's a level playing field for all raw leaf tobacco suppliers, and for the first time, we would require fine-cut tobacco to be marked.

The bill would permit police to seize illegal, unmarked tobacco found in plain view, and we intend to strengthen our important partnerships. There are a lot of partnerships, including with First Nations.

I am proposing a series of realistic and balanced measures that move us closer to our goal of a smoke-free Ontario. This legislation is an important step. We must remain focused, we must be thorough, and we must be persistent in our goal of reducing youth smoking rates. Our kids are counting on us.

I believe these measures are the right ones at the right time and will make a real difference. I look forward to working with my colleagues in every party to make this bill law. Together, we can take yet another important step in the right direction.

SMOKING CESSATION

Hon. Margaret R. Best: In 2004, the McGuinty government embarked on a commitment that earned Ontario international recognition as a leader in the battle against smoking. I am pleased to speak today to this government's commitment to build on that solid foundation with a renewed smoke-free Ontario strategy, and I certainly want to take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Revenue for her input.

Tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in Ontario. It kills 13,000 people a year, three times the combined deaths caused by alcohol, drugs, suicide, homicide and car crashes. Our government is taking a whole-of-government approach in support of a renewed smoke-free Ontario strategy. We are working collaboratively with other ministries to take additional actions and make new investments, and are seeking further cross-sectorial collaboration in pulling in key partners to buttress our efforts. We are addressing some key recommendations provided in the October 2010 report of the Tobacco Strategy Advisory Group.

We will continue to review our progress and, over time, consider additional actions that may be taken to further reduce smoking prevalence rates in Ontario. In so doing, we will continue to work with our partners to get their best advice as the government moves forward to further prevent young people from becoming addicted to tobacco. I do see some young people in the Legislature today. I would like to call out to them to say to them, "Tobacco is bad for your health. Do not take up the habit."

We also want to make it easier for smokers to get the help they need to quit and to reduce demand for all tobacco products. To help smokers quit, the government is providing more ways for smokers to get the help they need. As part of our whole-of-government approach, the Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport will work collaboratively with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care regarding smoking cessation services and the addition of cessation drugs to the Ontario drug benefit formulary.

Our government's renewed Smoke-Free Ontario strategy will see additional investments of \$5 million in the funding for Smoke-Free Ontario. We're also exploring opportunities to engage employers and unions to assist workers in workplace settings where workers are at a higher health risk.

Preventing Ontarians, and our young people in particular, from ever taking up this deadly habit is an important component at the core of our approach. That is why the government's renewed commitment also includes increased prevention strategies to prevent youth from starting to smoke and supporting them in their efforts to quit. This means that we will be undertaking further research to inform our efforts to deter young people from using tobacco products, and using this information to further design and implement sustained, effective efforts to prevent youth from becoming addicted and further engaging youth at the forefront of shaping and leading these initiatives in order to maximize results through peer-to-peer influence.

I certainly look forward to working with my colleagues and our partners on these important next steps toward a smoke-free Ontario. These measures will make a real difference in creating a healthier province for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

TOBACCO CONTROL

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to respond to the comments made by the Minister of Revenue on behalf of my colleague Lisa MacLeod, the MPP for Nepean and our critic for revenue.

I have to tell you right off the bat, we all want to see young people not smoke. But the reality is, I can't understand why this is a revenue bill, although you are losing a lot of money in revenue now with the way the system works. I think if we were in power right now, we'd be calling this a community safety bill, because we like to attack criminals at the source: the manufacturing and distribution of contraband cigarettes. I think that's one of the areas that we're missing out on here. If we're going after people who are importing or manufacturing alcohol, we have the police community go after them. With grow-ops and meth labs and that, we have the police community go after them. This is just as bad. This is contraband cigarettes, and we're making it sound like a public health statement here, as opposed to a criminal—it's basically a crime.

I would like to see the bill. This is my opposition to this bill at this point, and I haven't even read it; I can tell you that right now. But this will be something we'll be seriously considering. I think we should be providing more resources for our police community so they can attack the criminals; they can find out at the source where these illegal cigarettes are being manufactured and distributed from, not by challenging someone because they find a plastic bag full of cigarettes in the back of a car. That's my concern with this bill right now.

I'm sure we will be debating this quite a bit over the next few weeks. We've actually asked about this for some time now. Over the last seven or eight years, we've asked the government to do more about the contraband cigarettes. Here we are at the 11th hour, five months from the election, and they bring out this bill. We'll

never have a chance to test this bill. Even if it was passed tomorrow, by the time you get it implemented, we won't have any idea how it will actually work before the election. So really, it's not fair to bring it out and say that it's a success because it could be a complete flop as far as we're concerned at this point.

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That's really all I have to say at this point. My colleague will be making the lead on this. Obviously we can't make it a community safety bill at this time, although we would if we were in government. However at this point, I'll turn it over to my colleague to speak on health promotion.

SMOKING CESSATION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm pleased to respond on behalf of our critic, Gerry Martiniuk. I had the pleasure of being part of the lung committee that all members of this House, all parties, are part of. We're certainly very aware of the impact of smoking on the lives of people in this province.

An estimated 33,000 Ontarians have lung cancer, according to the Ontario Lung Association, and regrettably, this number is expected to rise to 63,000 in 30 years. Unfortunately, as well, lung cancer does kill eight out of 10 people. It's also the leading cause of cancer death among both men and women. Smoking is the main cause of lung cancer, and, of course, lung cancer is the most preventable type of all cancers. This initiative today makes some progress towards discouraging people of all ages but particularly our young people from becoming smokers in the first place.

We know that smoking directly and indirectly costs our health system billions of dollars a year. Diseases such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and there are 780,000 Ontarians currently living with this disease, pose very serious problems for sufferers and for those tasked with treating the disease. Again, it is largely caused by smoking, and it's a very debilitating disease.

I am very pleased that this government continues the initiatives that were established by our Progressive Conservative government in working with people in the province of Ontario who have a very sincere commitment to a smoke-free Ontario and the need to continue to move forward with very comprehensive anti-smoking strategies, because we do need to do everything we possibly can to help people quit smoking and, obviously, recognize the perils of smoking as well. This will certainly be a good step in this direction.

I guess the other disease that we know is impacted by smoking is asthma. Let's continue to do what we can to encourage everyone in this province to stop smoking.

TOBACCO CONTROL

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thanks for this opportunity to respond to the minister. As you're well aware, Speaker, we in the NDP understand the need for and support the need for action on smoking. We know the consequences,

both in terms of people's health and in terms of revenues for this government, for the people of Ontario.

I have to say that actions should have come much sooner than today, much sooner than now. The contraband issue has been visible and action recommended since 2006 and earlier. It's now 2011, months before an election. One could call it a last-minute bill. Since 2006, we've known that police needed powers to seize contraband. Since 2006, we've known that people needed education to understand that buying contraband tobacco feeds the system that gets kids hooked. We haven't been seeing that action.

It is now April 2011. In 2008, the Auditor General reported that \$500 million a year in revenue is lost because of contraband. It is 2011. The clock is ticking down on this Liberal government, and really, they're just putting this bill in under the wire. Better late than never, but it was almost never.

The Liberals have had years to build agreements with First Nations, as has been recommended by people involved in tobacco control. Have we seen that? No, we have not, not according to the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians, who expected to have an ongoing dialogue with this government and consultation so that we could build an agreement and deal with the political problems that this issue ties together.

We have to ask: Will this bill be enforced? Will police who are already stretched in so many cities actually have the resources to pursue the powers they've been given? Will this program be funded, the programs that are necessary to actually educate people and change the thinking in Ontario? Will the government actually follow through even if this bill is passed?

Those are the very big questions that we want to see addressed as we go through this debate. I am not holding my breath.

NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

Hon. Gerry Phillips: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each party to speak on the National Day of Mourning.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed. Minister of Labour.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Next Thursday, we will stop to observe a sombre remembrance in Ontario and across Canada. It will be a Day of Mourning. On that day, we will remember workers who have been killed or suffered injury or illness on the job. On that day, we will lower our flags to half-mast to honour friends, neighbours and loved ones we've lost.

Since the 1980s, the Ontario government has recognized the Day of Mourning. It's a day observed in cities and towns across Ontario and Canada and in more than 80 countries around the world.

But today—today all of us must remember our resolve to ensure that the sacrifice of fallen workers and their families have not been in vain.

Ontario has worked hard to improve safety conditions and prevent accidents from happening in the first place,

and we're making progress. Since 2003, Ontario's annual rate of workplace injuries has dropped by 30%. But there is more work to do. We remain committed to improving the province's health and safety system and to increasing protection for workers. To that end, we have proposed amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

These proposed changes would, if passed, help save lives and prevent injury in Ontario by establishing a chief prevention officer and a special prevention organization that is more accountable at the Ministry of Labour. I urge all of us in the House to support this legislation, Bill 160.

We will continue to conduct multiple inspection blitzes in all workplace sectors, whether it's at construction sites, retail shops, mines or production plants, and we will ensure policies are created and strengthened to better protect our workers when they're faced with issues such as workplace violence and harassment.

We're doing all of this because we believe firmly that one injury in the workplace is one too many. Too many lives have been destroyed by workplace injuries. Too many families have gone through the pain of losing a loved one.

When it comes to health and safety, we all have a part to play. I encourage everyone to do their utmost to protect Ontario's greatest and most precious resource: our people and our workers. Working together, we will keep lowering the injury rates in Ontario workplaces and ensure that Ontario continues to be among the best and safest places to work in the world.

Some of you may be wearing yellow and black ribbons to commemorate the Day of Mourning. I encourage all of us to wear these ribbons. The black represents mourning; the yellow represents hope for a safer and brighter future, a future where there are no injuries, where everyone will be able to go home safe and sound and where lives are not at risk.

In a few moments, we will observe a moment of silence for all those who have suffered from a workplace incident. Let us pay our respects and honour their memories. Let us renew our commitment to ensure a future free of workplace injury and illness, a future where we can say to our children, "We never stopped doing all we could to protect you in the workplace."

Mr. Robert Bailey: Next Thursday, April 28, we will observe a sombre remembrance in Ontario and across Canada, the Day of Mourning. On this day, we will remember the millions of Canadian workers who have been killed, injured or suffered illness as a result of work-related incidents and hazards.

This year marks the 27th anniversary of the National Day of Mourning. In 1984, April 28 was declared the first day of national mourning by the Canadian Labour Congress. This day was chosen as it marks the passage of the first Workmen's Compensation Act, which was passed in 1914. Over the years, this observance has spread to many other countries.

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Too many lives continue to be destroyed by workplace incidents and occupational illness. Too many workers

lose their lives at Ontario workplaces and too many are injured.

Having made a career in the petrochemical industry, and as a father and grandfather, I find the statistics involving our young workers to be nothing less than devastating. All too often, I have seen workplace injuries and the burden they place on those workers, co-workers and their families. Some of the injured are fortunate and are able to return to their jobs, but others are not. Their lives and the lives of their families are changed forever. The human toll of workplace incidents and illness is enormous.

These injuries don't just place an undue burden on the worker and his family; they also create stress on our economy.

What is more devastating is that many of these incidents could have been prevented. No one should have to face the tragedy of a workplace injury, which is why we as Ontarians must continue to strive to prevent worker injuries and deaths before they occur.

Much progress has been made in health and safety over the years, as a result of the dedication and commitment of many individuals. But there's much more work to do. We can't do it alone. Government, employers, labour and unions all have an important role to play in promoting workplace health and safety. Today we're reminded of those roles.

In a few moments, we will observe that moment of silence to remember those who have suffered tragedy and illness in the workplace. Let us pause to honour the memories of all those workers and their families and pay our respects to their friends and loved ones who have also suffered. Let us do so while reaffirming our commitment and dedication to the ultimate goal of eradicating workplace injuries and fatalities.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I want to start by saying that I wish I didn't have to make a speech like this yet again. Today we commemorate the annual Day of Mourning for workers killed on the job here in Ontario. A week from today, on April 28, solemn events will be held across this province to officially mark the Day of Mourning. I wish the day wasn't necessary.

I also wish I didn't feel that I have to quantify the tragedy, but raw numbers are important. They're a grim reminder of the dangers Ontario workers face each and every day. So, in order to raise awareness, and in order to—in some inadequate way, really—offer comfort and sympathy to the families who have lost loved ones and reassure them that the loss of their loved ones isn't in vain, I'll cite some specifics.

In 2009, the last year for which full-year statistics are available, 73 Ontarians died because of the work they do. Since 2000, more than 1,000 workers have suffered this cruel fate. Just last week, a young man, 26 years old, lost his life while working at a food-processing plant here in Toronto, falling into a pasta-making machine. Clearly there's much, much more that needs to be done to turn every Ontario workplace into a safe workplace.

Sadly, fatalities aren't the only incidents we should focus on as we mourn workers who have been killed on

the job. There are also debilitating injuries and occupational diseases. In fact, occupational diseases are estimated to affect as many as 6,000 Ontario workers each and every year. But the WSIB does everything it can to play down the connection between work and disease. Untold illnesses are related to workplace exposures. Only 376 fatal occupational disease claims were made to the WSIB in 2007, and of these 376, only 279 were allowed by the WSIB, meaning 97 were rejected. Many, many claims are not even being made. In many cases, when claims should be being made, they simply are not, and when claims are not being made through the WSIB, the result is that workplace-related deaths and illnesses end up costing the Ontario health care system hundreds of millions of dollars per year. That's a lot of money. That should be money that's paid by employers who are actually making their employees sick and injuring them at the workplace. More importantly, it's money that wouldn't be needed at all if we focused on prevention, on enforcement, on inspections and on education.

At the end of the day, the real value of the Day of Mourning is that it raises awareness. So while we mourn for those who have lost their lives, I'm hopeful that an impression is made on employers first and foremost, but also on workers and, of course in this place, on policy-makers.

We mourn for the dead and we fight for the living. Why? So that we can avoid future workplace tragedies; so that every Ontarian who leaves for work in the morning can return home safe and sound that evening. That's the goal. It's a worthy one. It's a worthwhile goal.

It's my sincere hope that as Ontarians gather next week to mourn, they also give thought to how we can achieve an Ontario where no worker dies, is seriously injured or is exposed to conditions that may riddle them with disease in later years. I look forward to making a speech on that day that talks about how safe Ontario workplaces really have become. Until then, unfortunately, we mourn and we fight.

On behalf of my NDP colleagues and all New Democrats across the province, I want to convey my sincerest condolences to all of those families whose loved ones didn't come home at the end of their shift. In our way, by making these comments today, we're symbolically doing the march through the streets that is often done when high-profile public servants lose their lives. Every worker deserves to be acknowledged if they've lost their lives in the workplace because what it does is remind us that we have a duty, a duty to make workplaces safe. Unfortunately, we've failed in that duty thus far. We have an opportunity to fix that if we really put our minds to it and put our efforts into it. I hope that we do that so that we don't have to continue to have a Day of Mourning and so that it can become a remembrance or a symbol that's left in our past.

Our thoughts and prayers are with those families who have lost loved ones and who are dealing with loved ones who are suffering from diseases that are brought on from workplace exposures.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would ask all members and staff to join me as we observe a moment of silence for those individuals killed on the job, injured on the job, or who have died as a result of occupational disease.

The House observed a moment's silence.

PETITIONS

PHOTO IDENTIFICATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I am very pleased to present this petition on behalf of Loreen and Wayne Chambers of Alpha Mills Road in beautiful Streetsville. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas many seniors, visually impaired persons and other non-drivers do not need or are not eligible for a driver's licence; and

"Whereas many day-to-day transactions such as cashing of cheques; opening a new bank account at a financial institution; returning merchandise to a retail store; boarding a domestic flight; gaining admittance to bars, clubs and casinos; checking in at a hotel; obtaining a credit card, and even renting a video require government-issued photo identification; and

"Whereas Ontario's Photo Card Act, 2008, sets the legislative framework required to deliver a non-licence photo identification;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario develop a government-issued photo identification card and deliver, in 2011, an Ontario photo card identification for residents of the province over the age of 16 who cannot or choose not to drive."

This is a very reasonable petition. I'm pleased to affix my signature and to support it, and to ask page Daniel to carry it for me.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Milton is the fastest-growing community in Canada; and

"Whereas, during the past six years, 60,000 new people have moved to Milton and another 43,000 will be arriving in the next five years; and

"Whereas, over the next two decades, Milton will become the largest community in Halton region and the second-largest in the Mississauga Halton LHIN; and

1350

"Whereas this rapidly expanding community is still served by a hospital that is undersized and outdated in terms of its physical facility and aging infrastructure that was designed and built to serve 30,000 people; and

"Whereas no other hospital in the region, including the new Oakville hospital, has planned to provide core hospital services to Milton and its growing population; and

"Whereas the Milton District Hospital has not received approval for any added service capacity in the past 25 years; and

"Whereas Halton Healthcare Services has developed a responsive plan to address expansion of Milton District Hospital which it shared with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Milton District Hospital expansion project be identified as an urgent and top priority of the province of Ontario's multi-year infrastructure plan and that Milton District Hospital be authorized to move to the functional programming stage of the capital approval process."

I'm pleased to add my signature to this and pass it to my page, Madelaine.

HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is a petition to support extending the Ombudsman of Ontario's jurisdiction to include the Taron Warranty Corp.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas homeowners have purchased a newly built home in good faith and often soon find they are victims of construction defects, often including Ontario building code violations, such as faulty heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems, leaking roofs, cracked foundations, etc.;

"Whereas often when homeowners seek restitution and repairs from the builder and the Taron Warranty Corp., they encounter an unwieldy bureaucratic system that often fails to compensate them for the high cost of repairing these construction defects, while the builder often escapes with impunity;

"Whereas the Taron Warranty Corp. is supposed to be an important part of the consumer protection system in Ontario related to newly built homes;

"Whereas the government to date has ignored calls to make its Taron agency truly accountable to consumers;

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, support MPP Cheri DiNovo's private member's bill, which calls for the Ombudsman to be given oversight of Taron and the power to deal with unresolved complaints;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act to provide that the Ombudsman's powers under the Ombudsman Act in respect of any governmental organization apply to the corporation established under the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act, and to provide for necessary modifications in the application of the Ombudsman Act."

Obviously, I support this, and I am going to give it to Sydney to be delivered to the table.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads:

"Whereas agriculture plays an important role in Ontario's economy, and strong, prosperous farms mean a strong, prosperous Ontario;

"Whereas the establishment of a risk management program was the single most important action the provincial government could have done to help ensure the economic success of Ontario's non-supply-managed commodities;

"Whereas agriculture is a federal and provincial responsibility, and yet the federal government has refused to act and come to the table with their support;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We applaud the Ontario government's support of risk management programs and encourage the federal government to partner with the province and its farmers to support the risk management programs put in place by the province to bring much-needed stability, predictability and bankability to Ontario's agricultural sector."

I agree with this petition, and I will sign it and give it to Jia Jia.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, signed by a great many people in the province of Ontario.

"Whereas multiple industrial wind farm projects are being considered by the government of Ontario in the absence of independent, scientific studies on the long-term effects on the health of residents living near industrial wind farms;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the government of Ontario to put a moratorium on any renewable energy approvals for the construction of industrial wind farms in the province of Ontario until such time as it can be demonstrated that all reasonable concerns regarding the long-term effects on the health of residents living near industrial wind farms have been fully studied and addressed."

I affix my signature, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the fact that you allowed me to present this on their behalf.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'd like to read this petition on behalf of the constituents of Minister Eric Hoskins.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas in January 2009, Health Canada approved the medication Soliris on a priority basis for patients with paroxysmal nocturnal hemoglobinuria (PNH); and

"Whereas PNH is an ultra-rare, progressive and life-threatening blood disorder for which there were no therapeutic options until Soliris; and

"Whereas Soliris is the first and only proven effective treatment for PNH, significantly benefiting patients around the world;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To urge the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to immediately provide Soliris as a life-saving treatment option to patients with PNH in Ontario through public funding."

I agree with the petition. I want to give it to page Cherechi.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to present this petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly on behalf of my seatmate, the hard-working member for Niagara Falls. It contains the signatures of quite a number of people from his Niagara Falls community. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the people of Ontario deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents, as requested in Bill 22, put forward by MPP Kim Craiton; and

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents;"—and it goes on with a number of other technical amendments.

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

I'm pleased, on behalf of the member for Niagara Falls, to affix my signature to this petition and to ask page Gemma to carry it for me.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Khalil Ramal: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas paramedics play a vital role in protecting the health and safety of Ontarians; and

"Whereas paramedics often put their own health and safety at risk, going above and beyond their duty in servicing Ontarians; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario annually recognizes police officers and firefighters with awards for bravery; and

"Whereas currently no award for paramedic bravery is awarded by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas Ontario paramedics deserve recognition for acts of exceptional bravery while protecting Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 115, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Maria Van Bommel on October 6, 2010, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery."

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to Daniel.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

ONTARIO ONE CALL ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR ONTARIO ONE CALL

Mr. Bailey moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 180, An Act respecting Ontario One Call Ltd. /
Projet de loi 180, Loi sur Ontario One Call Ltd.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Before I begin, I would like to welcome the following people to the Legislative Assembly today, all of whom have been instrumental in bringing Bill 180, An Act respecting Ontario One Call Ltd. to fruition.

For lending their support to our efforts, I'd like to welcome in the west members' gallery: Geoff FitzGibbon, executive director of Ontario One Call; Jim Douglas, president of Ontario Regional Common Ground Alliance; Paul Rietdyk, Matthew Gibson, James Whittaker, Corina Emde, Laura Whitwham of Union Gas; Ben Hamilton, Vicki Mitchell, Sean Boland, Grant Kilpatrick, Greg Knopinski and Jamie Milner, all of Enbridge Gas Distribution; Leslie Elliot and Lynn Chaput of Bell Canada; Dave Wulff of Vivax; and Gord MacMillan of the city of Toronto.

I'd just like to take a moment to explain why this bill is so important to me. First of all, throughout my life, in industry and beyond, I've always thought that safety should not be voluntary; it, in fact, should be mandatory.

My riding of Sarnia-Lambton is home to Ontario's oil, gas and chemical industry, an industry that I devoted over 30 years of my life to. In fact, just prior to my election to this House, I worked for Nova Chemicals, St. Clair River works, in Corunna, where I was a construction coordinator and was in charge of issuing excavation permits, among other duties.

1400

Since the first discovery of oil in North America, in my hometown of Oil Springs in 1858, the people of Sarnia-Lambton have been leaders in the development practices and technology that have helped change our society for the good. Sarnia-Lambton became a major oil refining centre during Ontario's 19th-century oil boom and a global centre for petrochemical production during World War II.

Today the city of Sarnia and the county of Lambton play a major role in Canada's petroleum market and are the terminus of many major pipelines leading from the United States and western Canada, and of course many of those pipelines branch off these main lines to connect the

city's petrochemical and other infrastructure to downstream facilities.

When working in Sarnia's Chemical Valley, the first lesson that any new employee learns is that safety is always job one. If you talk to any of the hard-working employees and managers involved in Sarnia's petrochemical industry, they'll tell you that being aware of what dangers you may face on a job site is the only way to know what sort of precautions you need to take. This is even more important when those pipes, electrical or telecommunication lines you are working on are a part of that vast network of hidden infrastructure that connects all of our plants, factories, businesses and homes.

However, today, homeowners and excavators alike are left with a system to locate underground infrastructure which is outdated, overcomplicated and very cumbersome. To be frank, Ontarians are left with a system which is unnecessarily compromising the safety of homeowners and excavators. For example, today, before you plant a tree, dig a garden, landscape or fence your lot, excavate for a pool or driveway, or add a porch or deck, you as a homeowner or excavator are expected to call for the locates of underground infrastructure on your property before you excavate. In other words, you are expected to call for the locations of wires, pipelines, water mains, and anything else that could be under your property. Then those utilities, hopefully, will arrive to mark the ground above where this infrastructure exists.

The problem is that in many communities across Ontario you may have to call up to 13—that's right, 13—different phone numbers to ensure that you have covered everything that might be underground in your area. So before you start your project, you need to account for electrical power lines, cables, conduits, street lighting, traffic signals, gas, oil, petroleum, potable water, sewers, telecommunication lines, signal lines and other conduits, and the list goes on. This is what I mean when I say that Ontario has an outdated, overcomplicated and cumbersome system in place. So I don't think it will be too much of a surprise to you when I say that some homeowners and excavators simply aren't bothering to call before they dig.

Without easy access to proper and complete information of underground infrastructure, damage regularly occurs to natural gas lines, electrical wiring and water mains, so at the very least, this means increased costs to homeowners, excavators, municipalities, taxpayers and ultimately the province. Accidental damage to underground infrastructure is not only expensive, but it can be deadly. Today, the number of emergency calls that result from damage done to underground infrastructure in Ontario is on the rise due to the growing complexity of underground infrastructure in our province. Accidental hits to pipelines, especially those carrying natural gas, are an increasing threat to public safety for all Ontarians.

Just for a moment, consider some of these real-life scenarios. Surgeons in our province now perform state-of-the-art telesurgery on patients across Canada. Imagine the complications that would result from a contractor

digging without locates, damaging that telecommunication line and interrupting or cancelling that surgery while in progress. These have happened. Or consider what could happen, like in the fall of 2010, when a contractor digging without locates in Whitby, Ajax and the Oshawa area—on three separate days in one week, this contractor damaged the telecommunication line, impacting service to over 250,000 customers. Just imagine if this happened during a major event like the Super Bowl, the Stanley Cup finals or the upcoming royal wedding. Just this week, a contractor digging around a Union Gas facility without proper locates damaged a major line that cut off gas service to over 60 customers.

These are just a number of examples of what can and has happened when contractors and/or homeowners dig without locates in this province. In fact, in Ontario, there were over 5,500 gas pipeline strikes between January 2008 and December 2010, and unfortunately, two of these strikes tragically resulted in fatalities.

Last autumn, a company called Genco Masonry was fined over \$225,000 following a fatal explosion at the site of a residential home construction. The company was employed to do landscaping work at this Niagara Falls residence when they accidentally punctured a propane line on the property. This propane leaked through the earth into the homeowner's basement, where it ignited and resulted in a large explosion, demolishing the home. Tragically, a 58-year-old grandmother of three who was in the home at that time died in the explosion, and two other women were seriously injured.

Following an investigation last November, the Ministry of Labour found that this landscaping company had made no effort—no effort at all—to discover the location of underground utilities or have these locates marked. This grave oversight left the workers onsite with no knowledge of what was beneath the ground where they dug and, tragically, resulted in the death of this Niagara Falls woman.

But it's not just small firms that can miss locates. Last month, a judge ordered a major construction company in the Toronto area to pay more than \$280,000 in connection with a fatal propane explosion at an East Linton home near Owen Sound. Again, an unmarked propane line was severed the day before the explosion using a Ditch Witch burrowing machine. This propane leaked through the soil and permeated the concrete block foundation, then was ignited later on when a candle was lit in the home. One resident escaped unharmed; the other was caught in the explosion and fire, resulting in third-degree burns to 85% of his body. He passed away two days later, tragically.

The business of digging in Ontario is a risky business. Sitting idly by and doing nothing is not an acceptable position when the well-being and livelihood of Ontario residents is in jeopardy. I believe it is long overdue for our province to have a mandatory one-call system. That is why I introduced Bill 180, the Ontario One Call Act, 2011. Bill 180 will create a single call centre for all underground locates for the use of homeowners and

excavators alike. So instead of calling 13 numbers to receive all of their locates, homeowners and excavators alike would make one free call to Ontario One Call, and they would dispatch the utilities to mark the underground infrastructure.

This is a simple solution. The organization and capacity to implement this system is currently available. Ontario One Call is already operating as an industry initiative, a central call centre in Guelph with 130 members representing over 700 infrastructure agencies in Ontario. Unfortunately, since participation is not mandatory, the majority of municipalities and small utilities have yet to join in support of this useful and prudent call system. Industry experts estimate there are still over 400 utilities and municipalities with infrastructure in the ground that have not registered.

The evidence of the effects of mandatory one-call systems is clear and abundant. Currently, each and every United States state has in place a mandatory one-call system. The federal government of the United States thought it was such a good idea that they mandated a national number, 811. When you dial 811 anywhere in the US, you are automatically connected to the call centre that has access to your area's information. As a result of the 811 system, incidents of infrastructure and utility damage decreased by close to 70% between 2004 and 2008. That's 70%. That is a major shift away from damage and waste to increased safety and productivity. That's the sort of result that the good people of this province deserve when this House hopefully passes this legislation.

I hope that all members of this House can recognize the need to implement a simple and effective solution to a persistent problem with the current utilities locating system. Thus, I would hope that the members of this House will assist me in moving Bill 180 through the House and moving one step closer to creating a comprehensive one-call system.

As I said, safety shouldn't be voluntary; it should be mandatory.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's often a joy, mainly and mostly shared by our Toronto members here in our caucus on Thursday afternoon, to listen to private members' public business, because here's where opposition members have a chance to truly be heard, often coming out of a sense of frustration where the ministry is across the aisle not doing what we hoped they were mandated to do.

Here is a classic case. Here is the member from Sarnia-Lambton, who, because of his knowledge of the industry, because of his experience in his constituency, is actually doing a very good job of representing them here and bringing their concerns forward. And he's bringing their concerns forward in a responsible manner. That is to say, first and foremost, this was taken to the ministry. First and foremost, it was brought to the attention of those who had the power to do something about it in the majority government, and it got no answer; it got no

action. It came back to the member. He brings it forward, hopefully, to get what they couldn't get in the first place. It's sad, one has to say, that they couldn't get it from the Ministry of Consumer Services in the first place, but it's still honourable that the member has gone the route and is bringing it back now, as he should.

1410

I want to say, first and foremost, that we in the New Democratic Party think that this is a worthy bill. It should go to committee. It should have committee time. It should be looked at. There are ramifications. We are going to support it. We think it's a good thing, but we also say that there are many who would like to come and make submissions around this bill, to highlight other issues that are really corollary issues to this as well.

We were concerned at first a little bit that this might be a private-public partnership agency, but the member has spoken to that and addressed it. Now it's voluntary. What we're only asking in this bill is that that be made mandatory.

I'm a homeowner, and like many homeowners, I have done renovations, particularly in my backyard. I remember putting in a deck, and I remember my poor contractor in his frustration phoning around trying to get responses. You can imagine my frustration, because I'm paying him on an hourly basis. Between the two of us, we were a little upset that this wasn't something that could be addressed very quickly.

Certainly, as the member from Sarnia-Lambton outlined, all of the instances where grievous harm has been done because the rules weren't followed—we in the New Democratic Party have some concerns. It's interesting that I just read a petition about one of those concerns, about Tarion, the oversight agency around builders, period. There's no Ombudsman oversight of Tarion, which means there's no real public oversight over building in this province. That's again something that we would like to highlight because you get new homeowners who buy homes where the real work hasn't been done, the background work hasn't been done, and they discover sometimes years down after the Tarion warranty or even during the Tarion warranty that there are serious foundational or HVAC issues with their homes. These are all problems that this bill is kind of the tip of the iceberg on.

Here's an issue of public safety. It's kind of a no-brainer, I think. It's an issue of public safety. And it's not only privately owned contractors and builders that have this problem. I know that in my own riding we came across a problem where municipal contractors were out working and didn't get all the numbers called, I guess. There was a potential disaster happening in my own riding. This was government contractors working who couldn't and didn't get the information.

To make it mandatory is just obvious. It seems to me it's obvious. Of course, the reality is, if it's not mandatory and you have to phone 13 different agencies—my goodness, just trying to get through to one from my constituency office sometimes takes all afternoon. All members know how difficult it is sometimes to get infor-

mation. As I say, all my constituency staff do is fight with bureaucrats all day long on behalf of my constituents. Imagine 13 phone calls to put a post in your backyard. Chances are it's not going to happen, and maybe the ramifications aren't great for that, but certainly, when you're digging out a street, they become extremely relevant.

So this, to me, is kind of a no-brainer. I think it's very sad, quite frankly, that it's had to come to this. We have—what?—five weeks left of the legislative session? We know that this is a government that hasn't been very forthcoming in terms of getting private members' bills before committees unless it's their own. Occasionally for their own they'll get committee time. Very rarely does an opposition member get committee time. I don't hold out a lot of hope that this bill, even if it's passed today, is actually going to become law. That's sad. I guess we'll have to wait till after the election for that.

But again, why did it have to come to this point? Why could this obvious matter not have been dealt with in legislation by the Ministry of Consumer Services?

Having said that, yes, obviously we're going to support it in the New Democratic Party. We would like it to go to committee. We would like to have a chance for people who have more expertise on the issue to be able to make their submissions.

Certainly it's a tip-of-an-iceberg kind of issue. We'd like to use that opportunity to make our own submissions around a number of problems related to development and building in this province. But for now, it's enough to say, well done, member from Sarnia-Lambton. Sorry you had to do it, sorry it hasn't been dealt with, but it's good that you've done it at all.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I am pleased to stand here and speak on this bill brought by my colleague from Sarnia-Lambton. Let me say that he has very good arguments for this bill, there's no doubt about it.

The only reason I wanted to speak to this bill is because it actually falls into an area that I have worked in extensively over my entire career. My background is that I worked for Bell Canada—it's nice to see all the key players here—for 17 years, and I've been in municipal politics for 17 years. Now I've been here for the last five and a half or so.

I would like to see my colleague from Sarnia have his bill approved and, yes, something done about this, but some of us may need to understand a little bit about why this has happened.

We're in the 21st century. In the 19th century, we had a better system. Our friends at the federal government have caused this problem. Our friends at the federal government have never stepped up to the plate to solve it. I'll share with you what it is: Prior to 1997, municipalities actually used to be compensated for their rights-of-way being used by the utilities. Then came deregulation of all the various utilities, and the communications industry wanted to get competition into the place quickly. To do

that, they needed access to the municipal rights-of-way, so they had to speed up the process. So the federal government brought legislation through the CRTC that actually removed the rights of municipalities that they own their right-of-way, that they govern it and that the utilities have to pay compensation for the use of it. In came the communications industry competition, and they were allowed to put their stuff anywhere in the municipal right-of-way without compensating the municipalities.

I know in my particular municipality, the city of Toronto, if I remember correctly, when that happened, we actually had a budget shortfall the following year of \$30 million or \$33 million, something of that nature. If I remember correctly; it was a long time ago. Since then, it has been chaos.

Your problem is, if you look at my colleague's bill, one of the key players in the industry is missing, one of the key players that causes all of the problems in the municipal right-of-way: the cable TV companies. They're not here.

I did have a chat with my colleague from Sarnia-Lambton, and he pointed out to me that on page 2 of the bill, paragraph 8 of subsection 5(1), "Members," has an all-encompassing clause that captures everybody who has assets in the municipal right-of-way. I said to him, "It's good you're putting it in. I hope we can enforce it." Anyone who's licensed by the federal government can do what they like, regardless of what we do here in the province.

I'm in full support of his bill. I would love to see us fix it because one of the biggest complaints I get from some of my constituents is that some of the digs get done, and they remain for six, eight or 12 months before they get repaired. When you call the municipality, the municipality has difficulty telling you which utility did the dig, and then they tell you that you should be calling somebody else to fix it etc.

When I first got into the municipal world, your municipalities knew what was underneath the street or underneath the boulevard. When you called them, they would actually call the utility and make sure that it was fixed, because the utilities had to get a permit to do the dig. Today, they don't go to the municipality too often to do the dig.

When I went to the city of Toronto after amalgamation, I remember the city bringing the key players together over two to three years to try to find a solution to this particular problem. It never happened. They would come to the table. Most of the big players like the gas companies and Bell Canada would be willing to participate. The small companies didn't want to because of the cost of joining this particular process.

1420

I wish my colleague good luck. I'm in full support of what he's doing here. My only concern is, if we say it's mandatory in our bill and someone refuses because they have a federal licence, what do we do? The other problem I see, and I hope we can resolve it—in regulations, or maybe the group can get together and solve it amongst

themselves—is that this centre could start out costing cheap. If you talk about an 811 system—I recently came back from the US, actually, visiting a 311 system. It is not a cheap system. It is very expensive to operate, to build and to administer. If we move from this to the next step, which is 811, I hope the key players who are using this system are the bearers of those costs, not the government, not the taxpayer and not the municipality. But they have to find a way that the cost can be shared amongst all of those who actually use it and benefit from it.

I will leave the rest for my colleague from London—Fanshawe to add to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakubuski: I'm pleased to join the debate today on Bill 180, An Act respecting Ontario One Call Ltd., tabled by my colleague from Sarnia—Lambton, Mr. Bailey.

I must say, I haven't had too many private members' bills with this many people joining us in the studio audience, or the gallery, as we say, so there's got to be some support out there. I think we could probably get a bigger crowd if we were legislating a lower price for Leafs tickets, but that's not on the table today. I guess we don't need any Leafs tickets today either, eh?

Anyhow, I do want to support my colleague and commend him for bringing forth this issue. As my friend from Parkdale—High Park said, it's an issue of public safety. It's also an issue of cost.

Let me just paint a scenario: You're in the process of doing an excavation of some kind, and you're trying to tee everything up and you think you've covered it all. Then all of a sudden, you start digging and you hit a ground-borne asset of some utility that you probably knew might be there, but nobody made the call. You've got 13 possible calls in any one circumstance, and then you turn around and you say, "Well, Joe, I thought you were calling them." Joe says, "No, I thought Pete was calling them." Then all of a sudden you've got a costly mess on your hands because someone failed to make the call.

The reality is that if you had a one-call system, then all of the utilities, regardless of what their nature is, would be contacted by the one-call corporation or whatever we're going to build to ensure that this happens. All of those utilities would actually receive the call so that their people or designates or whatever would be there to make sure that their assets were marked and they wouldn't be cut in the process of an excavation.

My friend from Sarnia talked about what would happen if this happened during the royal wedding. I do know some people who probably wished that the gas line was cut during their wedding, but in retrospect, they may have had some regrets. But certainly not me. I want to make it very clear, on the record, that I am not one of them.

But I notice that in the United States, this system is in place, or a system like it. Some kind of one-call system is in place in all 50 states. Mandatory one-call systems have

been successfully implemented in all 50 states. To my friend from Scarborough—Rouge River, I understand his concerns, but if we just let the concerns get in the way and don't try to find a way to make something happen, then nothing ever happens. I think what my friend, my colleague from Sarnia—Lambton, is doing is initiating the process to make sure that something happens. My understanding from people in the industry is that for years there have been attempts to make it a voluntary system. Unfortunately, it just hasn't got everyone involved that needs to be involved, so they've asked Bob Bailey to pursue this and this is exactly what he's doing.

Some of the numbers here—I just want to get my glasses here for a second. In 2004, there were 225,000 no-locate damages in the United States. In 2008, after the implementation of mandatory one-call systems, there were 75,000. That's a 70% reduction in the number of no-locate damages. When you start to look at the stark reality of the numbers, as my colleague from Parkdale—High Park said—she called it a no-brainer, and she's correct, because wouldn't you want a system that gave you the best assurance that when that shovel goes in the ground, it's going in the ground safely?

If we have the opportunity, we have the technology and we have the ability to actually implement a system that says with one call—there is no question now—you will know whether a particular ground-borne asset from a particular utility is in that ground, and if so, that it's been located so that when you drop that bucket or that blade, you're doing it in the knowledge that that excavation will be safe, why would we not want to do that?

I understand that there could be some municipalities that have some concerns, but it's our job to work around them. I support the bill and I commend my colleague for doing so.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you for allowing me to participate in the debate on Bill 180.

I listened to many speakers, and I want to congratulate the member from Sarnia—Lambton for bringing such an important issue to the House. I listened also to my colleague the member from Scarborough—Rouge River, who is an expert in municipal affairs and who dealt with this issue for many years, also as an employee of Bell Canada. They probably had a lot of calls in this regard from many different homeowners across the province of Ontario.

In the past, our government established One Call to protect many of the structures underground. It was years ago, done by the Ministry of Small Business and Consumer Services, to allow many different utilities to participate on a voluntary basis in One Call in order to protect consumers, protect the people and create some kind of safety mechanism in the province of Ontario.

Our data, our statistics, show that today, almost 80% of Ontario's population is covered by the One Call system; 72% for electricity; and 33% for municipal infrastructure. I know this is based on voluntarism by all

the providers, whether it's the cables of Bell Canada, gas utilities, water utilities or electricity—whatever—so everything underground.

I know the member from Sarnia–Lambton is asking that it be mandatory. The whole issue is, as the member from Scarborough–Rouge River mentioned, who's going to pay for this one? Who can we send the bill to? Most of the utilities, most of the providers, whether for cable, TV, electricity or whatever, benefit from providing the services. I think it would be important to you and to all the providers to get together and figure out how we can apply the system—in conjunction, of course, with the municipalities, because it's very important. We don't want to create a system to download more services onto the municipalities, because we just came and, for the last seven, eight years, uploaded many different services from municipalities, from Ontario Works to ambulance services to child care support—many different services we uploaded, because we don't want to overload and put a lot of pressure on municipalities.

Overall, I think it's a very important issue to be discussed, to bring forward to this House to be debated. I think the safety of the people of Ontario is very important to all of us. Also, for the people who provide services in the province of Ontario, it would be important to you too, because you don't want to waste time. You don't want your service to be interrupted by somebody digging and hitting your wires, cable or pipelines by mistake. All of this is important to you and to us, and to all of the people of Ontario.

1430

But the most important thing is how we can construct a bill—a law—to protect you and protect us, and protect all the people of Ontario. In the meantime, we don't want to burn the municipalities. We don't want to download more services to the municipalities. I think that if you are the beneficiary of the service and you collect the support and fees from the service, we're open as a government to work with you and work with municipalities to establish a law and a way to create a one-call service for all people, first, to save them time, and also to protect your services, because in the end, you invest a lot of money underground. You don't want that service to be interrupted. You don't want that service to be damaged. Also, you don't want the homeowner to be at risk. Sometimes when they dig and hit a cable it might kill someone, or a gas line might create an explosion. So all of these elements are important to create protection for consumers and also to create some kind of safety mechanism for your infrastructure, which you invest a lot of money in to put underground.

This bill, Bill 180, introduced by the member from Sarnia–Lambton, creates a great discussion for all of us in this House to open, because in the end, as I said, two years ago we had a bill that talked about this issue. We have a law that talks about this issue, but it isn't mandatory. So the member from Sarnia–Lambton asked about a mandatory law in the province of Ontario to encourage or force all of the service providers to participate in it and be part of this one phone call.

In the end, I think I'm going to support this bill. I see a lot of encouragement letters from different providers—from Enbridge, from gas companies, from utilities companies and from cable companies, asking us to support this bill.

But in the end, as I mentioned, there are so many different gaps in the bill. That's why I think it would be the right environment for it to be introduced here and discussed, and hopefully it will go to committee and then we'll discuss it further. Then we'll see who's responsible and how we can create a bill that will benefit all of us as providers, citizens and also, as municipalities.

Again, thank you for allowing me to stand up and speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to rise in support of my colleague's bill.

I actually don't remember this kind of lobby on any particular bill in recent history. As we can see from the gallery, we have representatives of many stakeholders from different areas of industry and utilities, all of whom are very adept at copying the same information and sending it to us. Some of you could have been a little more creative, I would have thought, but in a day of wanting to be efficient, I suppose that's the answer. At least they're consistent in terms of the rationale presented to us for why this is so important.

The one organization that actually was a little more creative in their appeal to me was the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association. They made it very clear that, while they, as an organization, and the several businesses that are associated with them, are concerned about the safety issues that obviously are and should be apparent to everyone in this House and should be apparent to anyone who is in a position of leadership in municipalities, this is something that shouldn't even be before us.

I understand what the member is attempting to do, and rightfully so, and that is for those municipalities, for those jurisdictions that haven't seen the wisdom of this—that they should be then forced to do so by the Legislature.

As a Conservative, I don't like to do this. It's typical of the McGuinty government to tell people in this province what to do. They've told us what kind of dogs we can own. They've told us what kind of food we can have in cafeterias. They tell us when we can do our laundry. But I have to tell you, in seven years this is the first time that I'm willing to actually vote in favour of a piece of legislation that tells people what to do, because it's the right thing to do.

I know this is a no-brainer for every Liberal MPP in here because they can't wait to tell people what to do. So, in this particular case, I welcome their participation in this House.

I know the member will have no problem getting this bill passed.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Pretty soon the member from Newmarket–Aurora is going to call for the regulation of the financial industry, and that will be the day. This is only the beginning, but you've got to start somewhere, and I understand.

I'm going to support the bill that's been presented by the member from Sarnia–Lambton because I think it's a reasonable bill.

I also understand why the member from Scarborough–Rouge River raised a number of issues—and I think they're reasonable. I wish I had your research, by the way. I'm telling you, we need to elect more New Democrats so that we can have a couple of more researchers to help us out—Ted, you don't agree with that?—as a matter of fairness.

The member from Scarborough–Rouge River raises a few concerns. There's no doubt that there's a big cost factor in all of this. But to balance that argument out, it does cost, as the member from Sarnia–Lambton alludes in his notes—the other good research that you've done. We're spending nearly \$33 million each year because of the cost that is attributed to not knowing what is under the places that these folks here to my left are working on. So there is a cost. Somebody's paying for that, and it's probably me and you and the working stiff who earns a little bit less than we do. So, while there is a cost in developing a one-stop centre, there is a cost in not doing something about it. Either way, we're paying for it. The question is, how are we paying for it? Who is paying what, and how fair is the distribution of those fees? Is that correct? Just nod your head. I suspect there is an unfair level of what is being paid and by whom, and that should be addressed.

That's a good reason to send this to committee: so we can have the industry players that are here today, including those who don't want to join, come and talk about why they don't want to join.

The other argument that the member from Scarborough–Rouge River makes is a good one, and that is that some of the players that are federally regulated don't want to join. The question is, is it cost or something else? Either way, we would find out by having hearings. But if the province were to set up a one-stop centre and some of the federally regulated folks don't want to join, in my view, we would have the power—you, in this case, at the moment—to be able to say, "You've got to join." So we either embarrass the industries that don't want to take part—the cable industry—and/or we embarrass the federal government and the minister related to it who don't want to force the people who fall under their jurisdiction to do so.

I know the member from Sarnia–Lambton is going to go hard on Jim Flaherty to make sure that he goes hard on the cable industry to be part of this mandatory one-stop centre. Is that correct, Bob? That's what we want. We want to be able to reach out to New Democrats, Liberals and Tories to work together and make it law.

I find this a reasonable proposal. If there are issues of unfairness in terms of who's paying what, that should be

dealt with, either in committee and/or under regulation, once we agree about the criteria under which this should operate. I think that's a manageable thing. But there's no doubt that we've got to involve the other players who don't want to take part; the question is, how do we do that? In my mind, if we were to create a provincial call centre, that would begin to put some pressure on the federal government and those regulated industries, like cable, that don't want to be part of this.

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My view is, the member from Sarnia–Lambton has brought forth a reasonable proposal. In my mind and in our mind, it's a reasonable thing to be doing. If there are questions, we can deal with that in committee. The problem is, like so many other bills—and this is what troubles me. I've got to tell you, when we were in government in 1990, one of my proudest of moments was that we passed 17 private members' bills. I know some of you will say whatever you want to say—blah, blah, blah—about that, but I was proud of that, and that was historical. We do not do enough of that, in terms of paying attention to what members introduce in this Legislature. We bring it to committee, they're debated and they're passed. Many more of these bills should be passing, and they're not. I find that regrettable. Many governments have been part of the problem on this. Even though we accuse the governing party at the moment for being the culprit, many of us have this problem, and we all need to solve it.

Congratulations, member.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm certainly pleased to support this bill which has been put forward by my colleague the member for Sarnia–Lambton. If you take a look at Bill 180, it would obviously create that single call centre for all underground locates for use by homeowners and excavators alike. I'm thrilled that there's so much support for this bill. Hopefully, it can be passed, because I think the member for Sarnia–Lambton has certainly identified an issue of importance.

I say that because I don't know when I have, in recent years, received as many emails and phone calls from supporters of this bill and people asking that I would support it and also indicating they would hope that all three parties in this House would pass this bill today.

It's obviously an issue of great importance. It is an issue which, I think, has received almost the unanimous support of the stakeholders in the industry and from consumers and individual businesses. I think in light of the fact that we're hearing that, when there is accidental damage to underground infrastructure, it can be not only expensive but, as we also have heard, it can be very deadly as well—at a time when we see a growing complexity of underground infrastructure in our province, the accidental hits to pipelines, especially those carrying natural gas, are an increasing threat to public safety for all Ontarians.

I was quite surprised to learn that in Ontario, there were over 2,500 pipeline strikes in a 16-month period,

spanning January 2008 to April 2009. Two of those strikes, of course, did result in fatalities.

I applaud the member for bringing forward this bill today. We have a lot of infrastructure in our province and we need to make sure that we move this bill forward today in order to ensure safety and efficiency.

This bill today, and this one-call system, which would be mandatory, would allow all homeowners and anyone else working underground to place one phone call and know whether or not it is safe to dig. It would also facilitate faster and safer development for business, it would streamline and simplify the process, it would reduce wait times, and, of course, most importantly, it would reduce the accidental damage to the existing underground infrastructure.

We know that when there is damage—I've talked about the fatalities that can ensue, but there are also increased costs to property owners, excavators, municipalities and, at the end of the day, all the taxpayers in the province of Ontario.

So I applaud the member for bringing the bill forward. I would encourage all of my colleagues from all three parties to support this bill. The bill really is based on his own personal work experience. It is a good bill. This bill would certainly allow Ontarians to dig and excavate with peace of mind. By following one single step, picking up the phone, we can ensure that there is greater safety and efficiency in our province. So thank you to the member from Sarnia-Lambton.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Sarnia-Lambton has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Let me begin by thanking all members of the House from all three parties who have participated in the debate today: the members for London-Fanshawe, Scarborough-Rouge River, Parkdale-High Park, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, Newmarket-Aurora, Kitchener-Waterloo, and Trinity-Spadina. I don't think I missed anyone; I hope not.

To recap, the Ontario One Call Act, Bill 180, will create that single call centre and database for all underground locates that can be accessed by homeowners and excavators alike, at no charge to those homeowners and excavators.

Access to utility locate information in an efficient and timely manner will decrease the unnecessary cost of damage and lost productivity that results from thousands of inadvertent utility line strikes every year. Mandatory participation by organizations with underground assets will increase the awareness and understanding of the need to properly locate buried infrastructure before a project is undertaken. This awareness can and will save lives in our province, protecting residents and workers alike. The Ontario One Call centre is an initiative that was created and brought forth by the utility industry themselves and their contractors to reduce infrastructure damage and lost productivity.

As a homegrown solution, the Ontario One Call Act, 2011, has the broad support of industry, thanks to a fair

and inexpensive approach that ensures participation and service delivery. It is my hope that this piece of legislation, if passed, will lead to a safer, more productive and prosperous environment for those endeavouring to dig or excavate in our province.

Again, I would like to thank Ontario One Call, the Ontario Regional Common Ground Alliance, Union Gas, Enbridge Gas Distribution, Bell Canada and the many other utilities, municipalities and excavators for their committed and continuing support. Remember, safety should not be voluntary. It is time that all of Ontario's infrastructure agencies and underground asset workers work together and create this smart, comprehensive system in our province.

I ask this chamber to pass Bill 180, the Ontario One Call Act, and always, always, remember to call before you dig.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for Mr. Bailey's ballot item has expired. For those people visiting us today in the galleries and those watching at home, we will vote on this bill in about 100 minutes.

PUBLIC SECTOR
SALARY DISCLOSURE
AMENDMENT ACT, 2011
LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA DIVULGATION
DES TRAITEMENTS
DANS LE SECTEUR PUBLIC

Ms. Horwath moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 177, An Act to amend the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, 1996 with respect to disclosure of severance payments / Projet de loi 177, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur la divulgation des traitements dans le secteur public à l'égard de la divulgation des indemnités de cessation d'emploi.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Horwath.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm very, very pleased to begin the debate on Bill 177, An Act to amend the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act. This is a bill that would finally shine the light on backroom golden handshakes by requiring severances to be included on the annual sunshine list.

I want to explain, first and foremost, why, in my opinion and New Democrats' opinion, this bill is so important. As I travel the province, I see first-hand the extent to which Ontario families are struggling just to make ends meet: seniors struggling to pay rising hydro bills, young families struggling to be able to afford child care, students burdened by rising tuition rates, workers stressed out by rising gas prices.

Between September 2008 and May 2009, 250,000 Ontarians lost their jobs. Those who kept their jobs have seen their wages stagnate as the costs of everyday life

continue to rise. After inflation is taken into consideration, the average hourly wage in this province hasn't increased since 1991. People are getting by with less. Recent surveys have found that half of Canadians say that their financial situation has gotten worse over the past year, and 60% of families say that they live paycheque to paycheque. Households are taking on larger and larger debt loads. On average, we now have 1.5 times more debt than disposable income.

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And what is this government's response? This government's response to this crisis is to impose a regressive and unfair new tax on Ontario families at the worst possible time. As people are reeling from a recession that cost thousands of jobs and left many, many more coping with pay cuts, this government turns around and makes life more expensive. It added a new tax to items that everyone, regardless of income, relies on every day.

Ontarians are upset and they are confused by the McGuinty Liberals' policies, especially when they learn that the money brought in by the HST is not going to fund our schools. It's not going to help seniors who are stuck waiting for long-term care. Instead, what it's going to do is provide billions and billions of dollars in corporate tax cuts. That's what that money is going to. It's going to go to companies who are already reaping billions of dollars in profits. And it enrages people even more when they see public sector CEOs pocketing outrageous salaries while most families are struggling just to make ends meet.

In this situation of stagnating incomes and rising costs, it's understandable that Ontarians want to be sure that their tax dollars are being used as effectively as possible. Ensuring that this is the case is the least we can do as elected representatives. Taxpayers are generally okay with public sector employees being paid fairly. They get it; they understand that these are the very front-line workers who deliver the services that we rely on—our precious health care services, for example, and educational services in this province. But Ontarians are not okay with excessive salaries or exorbitant golden handshakes. They are not okay with that, I'm not okay with that and New Democrats are not okay with that.

The sunshine list is an important tool in ensuring the accountability of taxpayer dollars. It requires public sector employers to disclose salaries and benefits that are paid to employees if the total of those amounts is \$100,000 or more in a single year. However, it has serious limitations. It doesn't require that generous severance packages be made public. Those golden handshakes do not have to be listed on the sunshine list. Ontario families sometimes hear about six-figure golden handshakes been given to CEOs even after they fail to serve the public interest and leave their positions in disgrace. Sometimes—unfortunately, in many, many cases—they don't even hear about these golden handshakes at all.

Requiring public sector employers to disclose severance payments of more than \$100,000 would make the sunshine list more meaningful, and it would end over-

the-top golden handshakes. The number of sweetheart deals with departing CEOs on the McGuinty Liberal government's watch is absolutely sickening, and it's even worse when you think about the badly-needed services that those valuable taxpayer dollars could have been providing.

I'm going to list a few examples: the notorious former eHealth boss Sarah Kramer, who was fired in 2009 but received a severance pay of a reported \$317,000. Or Ron Sapsford, former Deputy Minister of Health, who quit in 2009 during the eHealth scandal. He earned a pretty good salary while he was working—over half a million dollars a year. This month, we learned that he received a severance pay of more than three quarters of a million dollars, an amount that an average Ontarian might earn in maybe 20 years, an amount that could have provided 10,000 hours of home-based nursing care for Ontario's seniors.

Or as another example, take Warren Chant, who was fired as the Windsor Hôtel-Dieu Grace Hospital CEO. He received \$300,000 in a severance package. Instead of padding the pockets of a rich executive, that severance could have provided 10,000 hours of homemaking support for senior citizens in this province—10,000 hours.

Or Julia Dumanian, CEO of Cambridge Memorial Hospital—another example. She was discharged and yet received \$650,000 in severance pay. That is enough to provide long-term-care beds for a full year for 15 seniors.

Diane Beattie, CEO of London Health Sciences Centre, resigned in 2009 after it was discovered she had dealt out over \$3 million in untendered contracts to a former co-worker. What did she get? She didn't get a slap on the wrist. She didn't leave with her tail between her legs. She received \$451,000 in severance. That's enough for 6,000 hours of professional nursing care in the homes of Ontario seniors.

The list goes on and on. Gerald Savoy, CEO of Montfort Hospital: severance pay of over \$1 million—two years' salary; John Skorobohacz, CAO of the city of Windsor: severance of at least \$220,000; Joe de Mora, CEO of Kingston General Hospital, severance of up to \$900,000. Duncan Brown, dismissed from the position of CEO of Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., receives a golden handshake of over \$700,000. Dennis Egan, CEO of Kitchener's Grand River Hospital: severance pay of \$736,000. Tom Parkinson resigns from his position as head of Hydro One and is paid a reported \$3.3 million.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You don't need to work, with that kind of money.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Absolutely. That's more money than many, many Ontario workers will receive in their entire lifetime.

Those are the ones we know about. For those ones, we know how much severance they received as they went out the door. There are many others that we don't know about, such as Debbie Sevenpifer, for example, who was ousted as CEO of the Niagara Health System early this year. We know she earned \$350,000 a year while at that

post, but her severance package, to this day, remains unknown.

This kind of lack of accountability for taxpayers' dollars is unacceptable, especially when residents of Niagara region have experienced closed emergency rooms and acute care beds, cuts to front-line services, and face a possible \$7-million operating deficit in the upcoming fiscal year.

In summary, what this bill does is protect Ontarians' interests by making sure that these backroom sweetheart deals are a thing of the past. Earlier this month, the Liberal government said it is "committed to getting best value for taxpayer dollars when it comes to health care." But this government is cutting vital health care services, and front-line staff are being slashed in communities across Ontario, while health care executives, on and off the job, are cashing in. This bill will rein in these excessive compensation packages and sweetheart severance deals. Will the government support us on this bill, or are they going to continue to look the other way while Ontarians are taken for a ride by well-connected health care insiders?

It's a pretty simple bill. It's about fairness. Ontario families are being squeezed for every last penny. They're being forced to pay more and more and more and they're receiving less and less and less, and all the while they are watching these public sector CEOs cashing in on their dime, on the public dime, making exorbitant salaries and taking in even more when they're fired. How is that right? How can that possibly be right? These well-paid executives are receiving handouts with hard-earned taxpayers' dollars while communities across the province are suffering health care cuts and reduced staffing for hospital clinics and emergency rooms.

What it does say about the McGuinty Liberals is that their priorities are out of whack. When this government can find bucketloads of money for hospital executives but Windsor can't get a shovel in the ground for a long-term-care facility that was promised four years ago, what does that say about the priorities of this government?

This is not the best use of our precious health care dollars. These golden handshakes have to stop, and one of the ways to get them to stop is by making sure that they are published on the sunshine list annually.

New Democrats have already pushed hard for another piece of the puzzle, and that is a hard cap, a permanent cap, on public sector executive salaries, which the government also opposed. The best way to rein in those salaries is simply to put a hard cap on them. But no, the McGuinty Liberals won't do that.

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So now we're here today to make sure that sweetheart severance deals are a thing of the past. I certainly hope that this government takes a wake-up call and does the right thing on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm pleased to participate in Bill 177, the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Amendment Act, 2011.

I listened to the member opposite, the leader of the third party, speaking about this issue. I don't know what she's bringing—nothing new. Actually, our government introduced public sector salary disclosure a long time ago. It's a part of our government's commitment to being accountable and transparent. She's talking about transparency and disclosing all the salaries, which we've had in place since we got elected in 2003.

Before, your government didn't open up the salaries or disclose the salaries to the public. But in our present, since 2003, we introduced an accountability bill to allow all the taxpayers across the province of Ontario to know how much the public sector salaries are, who's receiving it and why they're receiving it. It's online. Anyone, taxpayers across the province of Ontario, can go and see it; it already exists. So the member opposite, the leader of the third party, didn't bring anything new for the public of Ontario to support.

As a matter of fact, before 2003, the auditor wasn't visiting the books before the election; now it's mandatory. Before the election, the Auditor General can come and sign off about the books of the province of Ontario so people who can run can see exactly how much the coffers of the province have before making a commitment.

Also, she talked about new taxes and burdens on the people of Ontario. You know, the opposition, every single time they stand up, tell the people of Ontario, "It's a new tax being imposed on you," the HST. As a matter of fact, it wasn't a new tax; it was a combination of the PST and the GST. The PST and GST combined together became 13%. There was nothing new. As a matter of fact, all the experts in this field—our economic recovery in the province of Ontario, almost 93% of our economic recovery, came as a result of the HST.

Interjection.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: The member opposite probably forgot what his leader mentioned. She was talking about the new taxes, which is not a new tax. It was an old tax; it has always been around. We combined them together to make it easier and a lot better for the business people to conduct—and I'm talking about businesses in the province of Ontario. I'm talking about accountability and transparency.

All the people in the province of Ontario, all the public sector employees—

Mr. Paul Miller: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: In all fairness to the government, they have the right to give their response. But I think, for a point of order, the content of his response has nothing to do with what was brought forward by the leader of the third party—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Okay, I get the point. I would ask the honourable member to speak to the bill before us.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm speaking to the bill. I'm responding to the leader of the opposition when she mentioned about the HST, which we are proud of on this side, because this is an important issue for all of us. She was talking about: How come we imposed a new tax on the

people of Ontario? We created that tax to make business successful in the province of Ontario and to allow many people from across the globe to come and invest in the province of Ontario. As a result of this investment—that's why I'm responding to her; she mentioned this.

Again, we're talking about accountability. We're talking about the salary accountability—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just want to be helpful. It's briefing note three, not briefing note two, all right? The HST is two; three is this one.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): That is not a point of order.

The honourable member for London—Fanshawe has the floor.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I know the third party wants to send a message. They want to be partisan in this regard. They want to use whatever possible way to position themselves. That's fine. The sunshine list is fine. We publish this. Then the people of Ontario—

Interjection.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: It's important for all of us, for all the taxpayers across the province of Ontario, to know how much the public sector makes on a regular basis, which is published on a yearly basis—all the ministers, all the members of this House. As a result of our government's commitment to transparency and accountability, we are asked to publicly disclose salaries and expenses. We're open. We'd like everyone across the province of Ontario to know where their tax money is being spent. We are also open to any questions on a regular basis. We have an answer for all the expenses we have in the province of Ontario.

The member opposite mentioned the CEOs of hospitals being so-and-so with high salaries. I want to remind her—and she probably knows—that CEOs in hospitals in the province of Ontario are not appointed by the government of Ontario. They're appointed by the boards of many different hospitals across the province of Ontario, and their salaries are also dictated by the boards. Actually, we on this side don't dictate or micromanage every activity in the province. We respect the elected boards across the province who are elected by the people of Ontario to run their hospitals.

It's important for us to be accountable, open and transparent. I wish that the member opposite, as she promised, will post all of last year's expenses, which I don't think have been received by the fairness commissioner yet.

Mr. Paul Miller: I think she already did it.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: That's good. Thank you for telling me that she did it. Anyway, to my knowledge, it's not been published yet.

We are very accountable, every one of us, from the ministers to the members of this House. All of us published everything we have. We are open to talking about this issue any time, any day, because we have nothing to hide. We believe strongly in transparency and accountability.

I don't know what the third party is trying to establish by bringing this bill to this House. She's talking about

disclosing salaries. We already have a law in the province of Ontario where we disclose our salaries as members of the House. We already disclose our salaries as ministers and as a public office that runs the province of Ontario. So I don't know what she's trying to establish in this House.

We cannot ask other people to publish and disclose salaries. That is something we cannot control; it's something we don't appoint.

Interjection.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: One hundred per cent. All the public money that is generated by the taxpayers of Ontario, the taxpayers have the right to know exactly where this money is being spent—100%. We have no issue with that. All this money is being disclosed on the website. You and me and everyone across the province of Ontario can go visit the website and see where the money is being spent. That was part of our accountability and transparency.

I think the member opposite is not bringing anything new to the House here. She's taking the opportunity just to score some partisan points. There's nothing to it. I looked at this bill, and I don't see anything new. She's talking about transparency and accountability: We've already been doing that since we got elected in 2003. She's talking about disclosure of salaries: We have already been doing that since 2003. The Auditor General has the right to inspect the government's books any time, especially before the election, because we want the people of Ontario to know exactly how much we have and how much we're committed for.

That's not what happened in 2003. Before 2003, the past government told us that they had extras in the budget, and when we got elected in 2003 we found a \$5-billion deficit. That's the difference between the past and the present.

There's nothing to hide—nothing. Everything's open, everything's disclosed, and anyone across the province of Ontario can visit the public disclosure website and see exactly how much every member of the public sector makes, how much they spend and how they spend the money.

In terms of the CEOs she mentioned many different times, from London to Hamilton to Windsor—everywhere—I can tell her that the CEOs of hospitals are appointed by elected committees in every city. Those cities elect those people and appoint them, and also dictate their salaries, and their money is also disclosed on a regular basis. Any citizen of Ontario can visit those websites and see exactly how much those CEOs make, how much they spend, how much their offices spend and how much their staff spends, because we ask them to disclose all the information, because that information should be publicly announced. The people of Ontario, the taxpayers, have a right to know exactly how much those people spend.

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I'm not sure if I'm going to support something that does not benefit the public of Ontario, the people of

Ontario, and does not add to transparency or efficiency. I don't see anything new in this one, because we already have a disclosure clause in our government to allow people to know. I'm not sure what she's trying to establish in this bill. I don't see anything new. That is why—I'm talking on behalf of myself—I'm not going to support something that doesn't mean anything or has no meat to it. We already have a mechanism in place and a system in place and a website. All the information is on it.

I don't see any meat to this bill. I don't see any reason to pass this bill, because we already have it. We've already shown transparency and accountability through the years we've been in government. We already have all the information online. Any person, any taxpayer, can visit that website online and can see it. I don't see any reason to support it, as I mentioned.

In the end, I believe that our government is going in the right direction and the accountability measurements we put in place have been effective. Therefore I'm not going to support such a bill, just to try to create misinformation and mislead the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I had great hopes of the member who was speaking to this bill. At first he thought he would like the bill and vote for it, and then he completely turned around and did a flip-flop. Then I realized that he is sitting on that side of the House as a Liberal. I guess that's typical of what that government does.

This bill is about accountability: accountability of Ontario taxpayers' dollars. There should be nothing more sacred in this chamber than the transparency of Ontario taxpayers' dollars—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. I'd ask everybody to quiet down. The member is right to my left and I can barely hear him. Thank you.

The honourable member for Halton.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I know that the Speaker wants to hear what I'm saying. This bill is about the accountability of taxpayers' dollars. I was saying that nothing should be more sacred in this chamber than taxpayers' dollars and the transparency of those dollars. Yet this government has all kinds—we've talked about Sarah Kramer; we've talked about Ron Sapsford and the huge, huge severances and bills that were paid out—more than a worker would expect to make in a lifetime, paid out over someone who had resigned their office.

It doesn't stop with severances and people who are fired or people who resigned. There was a lawsuit regarding the OPP actions in Caledonia, where Mr. Brown and Ms. Chatwell were suing the OPP for lack of services. I think they were asking for \$7 million. That case was settled out of court, and yet there was no disclosure. We don't know how many Ontario taxpayers' dollars were spent, in the same way that we don't know how many taxpayers' dollars are spent in the severance relationships that the government has with other people.

That's wrong. These dollars are coming out of taxpayers' pockets, and they have the right to know how those dollars are being spent. They can't judge the worth of the government of the day if they don't know how that government is spending their dollars.

The Chatwell-Brown situation was one. Another one was the Samsung contract for \$7 billion. That contract is not an open contract that is available to the Ontario public to scrutinize. We don't know where that \$7 billion is going, other than the pockets of Samsung in South Korea. Those are Ontario taxpayers' dollars; they have the right, the inalienable right, to know where that money is going.

Then, of course, we have the granddaddy of all time, the Oakville power plant. First of all, Kevin Flynn, the member from Oakville, votes in committee that this power plant should be built, and then he spends the next three years trying to kill the thing. Well, eventually he did kill it—eventually—after the contract was signed, unfortunately. Now the government has to pay Trans-Canada, which had the contract to build that plant for \$1 billion—\$1 billion. And yet that—

Interjections.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Everything's in order. Don't worry about a thing.

Yet this government won't reveal—

Mr. Khalil Ramal: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The member from Halton is not speaking to the bill. The member is speaking about disclosure—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm making the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I don't agree with the point. He is speaking to government accountability of the taxpayers' dollars.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Unfortunately, my time is up. I would lecture you a little bit more about transparency and the importance of governments looking after the responsibility of taxpayers' dollars, something that this government has failed miserably on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's a pleasure to speak to the bill presented by our leader: Bill 177, An Act to amend the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, 1996 with respect to disclosure of severance payments.

This is a reasonable request to be making. I love to listen to the member from London-Fanshawe often, because he's a true soldier. He's the kind of guy the government puts in the front lines. As all the other generals are nowhere to be seen, you can always count on the true soldiers, who stand on the front line ready to defend the government. You witnessed today that only one member spoke to this, the member from London-Fanshawe. Why put many on the hook when you can put one on the hook with the government's position? He is willing to sacrifice himself for the cause—whatever that cause. He didn't quite speak to the bill, I have to say. He didn't speak to the bill at all. And I'm telling you this: When you've got a \$17-billion deficit, it would seem to me that the soldier and the generals would willingly, happily and together

join with the leader of the New Democrats and say, "We've got to control our costs."

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, no, member from London—Fanshawe. Putting the salary on the sunshine list is one, and she, as the leader, is proposing that we put the severance of their salary as well on the sunshine list. We want to know the severance package. You didn't speak to that at all. The point of it is that in her speech—and you heard; it's not like you didn't hear—she had three pages of CEOs who were either let go or left voluntarily and their severance is just beyond belief and beyond understanding.

This is not an attack on civil servants. This is not an attack. We support civil servants in Ontario. What we argue is that many of them are incredibly overpaid, and not only overpaid in salary, but their severance is out of whack with what is normally accepted by the majority of people. They're overpaid. So if you have a deficit, we argue that this is one way to deal with it.

By the way, I attack the wealthy in the private sector in the same way. I have no mercy for the private sector either. Because you'll have my Conservative brothers and sisters on the other side saying that we're just after the public servants. No, no; I wanted to attack viciously, as I did, and as I often try to do, when you reflect on the subprime fiasco—in the US, largely—the derivatives fiasco, where they bundled a lot of monies in mortgages and people who were buying them didn't have a clue what they were buying, but they were selling them to investors without knowing what they were getting. In the end, it caused an incredible worldwide problem. Who paid for that lack of regulation over those folks?

Interjection: The people.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The little people, and I'm not little. Those who earn \$50,000, \$60,000 or \$40,000, those were the ones, Paul, who were burned.

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So I attack them as viciously, and more so, than public servants who, for the most part, earn a lot less, but relative to what normal people earn in the civil service and outside—way out of whack.

Mr. Paul Miller: Read that one.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'll leave it for somebody else.

My point is we need to get a handle on these salaries. We've argued, our leader has argued and the NDP argues that we need to cap salaries. We desperately need to cap salaries. When the Premier earns \$200,000 managing 110 billion bucks, and then you've got one CEO of a hospital or Hydro One or any other government agency or commission that we're talking about—

Mr. Paul Miller: A university.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: —a university or even a college, where they earn more than the Premier, who manages \$110 billion, something is wrong.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Beg your pardon?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: He ain't worth 200 grand.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, no, no. You would argue that your former leader Mike Harris was worth his money; I'm sure you would say that. And if you don't say it, say it out loud.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: What's that?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: If you don't think your former leader Mike Harris was worth his money, tell us publicly.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I said McGuinty.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That's not fair. It is not fair. Leaders, whoever they are—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You're too loud; today, you're too loud. Whoever they are, leaders are underpaid relative to so many other people—underpaid. So if a Premier can earn \$200,000, and then we pay CEOs of a hospital, university or college or any other board, agency or commission more, something is terribly wrong.

We need to get a handle on that. This is one way to do it, and it surprises me that many Liberals simply just can't find a way to say, "She's right."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an honour to stand and support our leader, Andrea Horwath, and her bill.

The bill does a very simple thing: It simply asks that the severance, as well as the salaries, of public servants at the higher end, the echelon over \$100,000, be made public. These are our tax dollars—your tax dollars, if you're watching from home. And you should know that your tax dollars went to pay \$3,320,000 when Tom Parkinson, who was the CEO of Hydro One, left. That was a severance package; that's your money.

You should know that when Sarah Kramer resigned—in disgrace, I might add—from eHealth, that incredible billion-dollar boondoggle, she still got \$317,000 in severance. We could go down, and so our leader has, the whole list. It's frightening.

The government acts like they haven't heard this before. They certainly have heard it before. In fact, in 2002, the member from Hamilton Mountain, Marie Bountrogianni—I gather she's running for another position now—introduced a bill to require the disclosure of severance packages. That was in 2002.

On April 7 of this year, when the Minister of Government Services was asked whether the government should cap severance packages, he said, "Absolutely. We're moving towards that." Really, all we're asking is what the government itself purported to have asked, but hasn't done a thing about.

Let's put the backdrop to this bill in place. This is a province that has now moved into have-not status; we now get equalization payments. This is a province that has doubled the real debt under the McGuinty Liberals—we're now about a third of a trillion dollars in debt; that's real debt—and is running a record deficit, a deficit higher than all the other provinces combined right now. This is the same province that gave \$3.2 million to Tom Parkinson as a golden goodbye.

This is the province that is now in breach of United Nations human rights laws around affordable housing; we had a rapporteur come to Ontario to talk about how this government is in breach of that, because this government puts less than half, per capita, into housing than any other government across Canada. This is the government that has one in six children living in poverty, and more food banks in the city of Toronto than McDonald's.

This is the backdrop to the \$3.2-million golden handshake that Tom Parkinson got, or the estimated \$1.15-million handshake that the CEO of Montfort Hospital got, or the \$650,000 golden handshake that the CEO of London Health Sciences Centre got—and we could go on and on and on and on.

Think how many children that money would feed. Think how many rent supplements or affordable housing units that money would build. Think what debt that money would pay down. That's our money. That's the Ontario taxpayers' money. Did you ask them when you gave these CEOs their walking papers and a nice little thank-you card with a cheque for over \$1 million, \$3 million or \$500,000 in it? That's not even talking about their salaries, which are double or triple or quadruple what the Premier of the province makes. Come on. And you talk about fiscal responsibility? Good grief. My goodness.

We have some owners here of small business—small business that's suffering, that produces about 90% of the jobs in this province. They're hanging on by their fingertips through the recession, and they read this? You ask them for their taxes at the end of the year, and they read this? Frightening. It's shocking. I can tell you, we know you're the government of the mall and not Main Street; you've made that very clear. But to whack small business on one side and then pay CEOs on the public purse this kind of money just doesn't look good, because guess what? It isn't good. It's bad, it's wrong, it's immoral, it's unethical, particularly against the backdrop of poverty, homelessness, despair, layoffs, and job loss that is the province of Ontario right now.

That's why we're supporting a very simple bill that asks one thing: It simply asks to make public not only the salaries of CEOs and people on the public purse who make over \$100,000 a year, but also their severance packages. That's all the bill asks, which is what your own minister asked back in 2002, which is what your own Minister of Government Services hinted that they would do and accomplish, and what you have not done and what you have not accomplished. That's what we're asking you to vote for. Stand up and be counted.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise and speak in support of Bill 177, An Act to amend the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, 1996 with respect to disclosure of severance payments. Speaking on behalf of our caucus right now, I just can't believe that this isn't already law. To me, it's a natural thing.

I was listening to the member from London—Fanshawe discuss—you know, you should see yourself on tape.

You should go back home and watch what you said, because it's unbelievable. How can you possibly defend this?

What brought this to my attention even more was the story with the former deputy minister in the eHealth scandal and what happened. That story broke a couple of days before—I had a booth at a home show in Orillia, and I had a nurse come up to me from the Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital. She used to have nine nurses in her section. That's why I laughed this morning when the Minister of Health was standing there telling us how many new nurses they've got out there. What they've done in that unit is they've cut them all back to assistant nurses, like RPNs, so they can't carry on the same duties. What happened on that particular day of the home show is they had cancelled two surgeries because they didn't have enough nursing staff. The nurse came to me—and she's an older nurse, ready to retire in three or four years—in tears, at a home show. And then she hears this story about the former deputy minister getting this severance.

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We don't even know yet whether it was a severance. It was a lump sum of money for 2010. Don't tell me there's another severance on top of that that we don't know about. Is that what's happening? Maybe somebody on that side can explain that. Is there another severance package coming for Mr. Sapsford that wasn't included in that \$763,000 he got for 2010?

The public in the province of Ontario has every right to know that. It doesn't matter where you are in this province; if you've got health care issues, and you're a taxpayer, you should know that. That money came out of the Ministry of Health somewhere. That is a very, very sad day.

Anybody on that side of the House should be ashamed of themselves for not supporting this legislation today. This is a good, simple bill, it makes common sense, and it's good for the citizens of the province of Ontario to know where their tax dollars are being spent, especially when you look at how many people—I'm getting people who are calling my office right now who don't have the \$75 for the HST on their oil bill.

I heard the Premier today saying that the hydro rates have evened themselves out; there's no problem. Is he in Wonderland? Where did he come from? There's no way on God's green earth. Hydro bills are going up. The HST has put everything up. We're sitting here trying to defend this day after day with these crazy answers. Of course, that's why they call it question period, not answer period: because we never get an answer anymore.

So we in this caucus will be supporting this legislation, and I think it would be an excellent idea if the members on that side of the House got behind it and supported it today. Don't take your marching orders from someone else. Listen to common sense, and support this legislation today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to support Bill 177, the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Amendment Act.

The goal of the sunshine list was to make government more open and accountable. Taxpayers have a right to know how their money is being spent.

According to the guide for preparing the sunshine list and the Ministry of Finance spokespeople, the current sunshine list does not include severances. That's where the mystery comes in, because the sunshine list that was released a few weeks ago on March 29 includes significant payments to two major players in the eHealth boondoggle, two people who left their jobs in 2009. Sarah Kramer, the former eHealth CEO, received \$107,000 in 2010 even though she left in 2009. Ron Sapsford, the former Deputy Minister of Health, was paid \$763,000 in 2010 even though he resigned in November 2009.

If, as the government says, severance pays are not included in the sunshine list, what were these payments for? It seems like a reasonable question and one that taxpayers deserve to have answered. Yet this government has consistently refused to provide more information. Many members on this side of the House have asked the Premier and cabinet ministers about these payments over and over, but they still haven't received an answer. If severances aren't included on the sunshine list, how do we know that they and other people involved in the eHealth scandal didn't actually receive even more taxpayers' money last year?

On November 17, 2009, Premier McGuinty said in this Legislature, "There were some problems, admittedly, at eHealth. They had to do with oversight." Now he's blocking this Legislature and taxpayers from having knowledge and oversight.

Under Dalton McGuinty, the sunshine list has tripled to 60,000 people. This year, all of the LHINs appear on the sunshine list, and each one is now spending over \$1 million in salaries. We believe that taxpayers' dollars should go to front-line health care, not to bureaucracy and red tape.

Unlike the members on the opposite side of the House, we understand that taxpayers are not an endless source of revenue. We understand that the three quarters of a million dollars that the McGuinty government gave Ron Sapsford last year came from hard-working Ontario taxpayers, families that were trying to make ends meet. Many of them are already struggling with the ever-increasing cost of living in Ontario, yet every time they turn around, the McGuinty government expects them to pay more: HST, eco fees and hydro cost increases.

This week, we found out that on May 1 hydro rates will go up again, costing Ontario families an average of \$75 a year. That money could have bought new clothes for the kids, paid for class trips or meant a new bike this spring.

Can we really ask families to make sacrifices like that and not give them clear information on where their tax money is spent? Is it really fair to ask them to make these sacrifices and then for the Premier and cabinet minister to

refuse to explain why someone received three quarters of a million in tax dollars that apparently wasn't a severance?

We believe that Ontario families have had enough. They can't afford more increases, and they want more from their government than government waste and cover-ups.

I hope that the members on the other side of the House will support this legislation and that the members on the government side will do the right thing and explain to the taxpayers what the payments on the sunshine list are really for.

Thank you very much for allowing me to say a few words, and I do hope that the government—apart from the member for London-Fanshawe, who seems insistent on not supporting this legislation—I hope the other members will consider the option of supporting this legislation and making the government come clean on where all the money is going.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The leader of the third party has two minutes for her response.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I first want to thank the members who took the time to speak to the bill, Bill 177: the members for London-Fanshawe, Halton, Trinity-Spadina, Parkdale-High Park, Simcoe North, and Oxford. I mostly want to thank the latter members for educating the member from London-Fanshawe on exactly what the bill was all about, because even though it's quite descriptive in the description of the bill, in the actual title of the bill, which says that it amends the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act with respect to disclosure of severance payments, somehow he just didn't get it, and I think that's one of the problems that we have with the government. They like to talk a lot about accountability and transparency, but they just don't get it. They don't understand that they don't only have to talk about it, but they actually have to do something about it, and by publishing the severance packages—the outrageous severance packages, the exorbitant severance packages that they're allowing these top public sector CEOs and other executives to walk away with—on the sunshine list, it adds to something called transparency and accountability.

So just like this government likes to pretend that they do that—the latest example was with the FOI process in hospitals, where the government brings forward a bill, and then, in the dead of the night, puts a little amendment into the budget to really negate any transparency and accountability in terms of FOI in hospitals, a little amendment that actually gets the hospitals off the hook and puts a loophole in place that you could drive a Mack truck through in terms of accountability and transparency.

That's the record of this government. They don't want transparency, they don't want accountability, and mostly, they don't want to take responsibility for acting in the public interest. The member from London-Fanshawe talked a lot about what he thinks the government is doing, but what they forget to do is act in the public interest, and that's all we're asking for in Bill 177.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time has expired for Ms. Horwath's ballot item. We'll vote on it in approximately 50 minutes.

TOWING INDUSTRY ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR L'INDUSTRIE DU REMORQUAGE

Mr. Zimmer moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 147, An Act to regulate the motor vehicle towing industry in Ontario / Projet de loi 147, Loi réglementant l'industrie du remorquage de véhicules automobiles en Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. David Zimmer: I intend on speaking on three points on this bill. First, I want to make a few comments about why the bill is important to the public and to the towing industry; secondly, I want to touch on some so-called technical aspects of the bill; and lastly, I want to speak about the support that the bill has garnered throughout the province.

In my discussions with my colleagues at Queen's Park and everyday Ontarians, I've heard countless personal stories about what happens when they have a towing experience. Almost everyone I speak to has their own towing experience to share, and when I say "experience," a better choice of words would be their own towing "horror story" to share.

Whether as a result of a collision, a broken-down vehicle or a parking violation, everyone is entitled to fair and equal service when having one's car towed for whatever the reasons that the tow is necessary.

The primary purpose of this bill is to establish a single body to manage a provincial regulatory system. Right now, there exist no common standards here in the province, no common fee structure, no common expectation of what a good towing experience might entail for the consumer or for the industry. This legislation is designed to address these uncertainties.

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This bill, if passed, would aim to do a few things. It would develop an effective and mandatory set of standards of operations to be followed by every towing company. It would develop mandatory education and training to ensure a high level of skill among towing operators, to ensure quality for money and to meet the needs of the consumer and improve public safety. It would establish continuous and professional communication links to all government agencies, including the Ontario policing community. It would provide a greatly improved and more professional approach to the towing industry's involvement in traffic accidents. It would greatly improve—and this is very important—the public perception of those engaged in the industry.

In the towing industry, the vast majority of towing companies are reputable, competent operators that pro-

vide value for money. Unfortunately, there is a segment of the towing industry that is operating on their own. They're outside the grid, as it were. When you dig around, you'll find out that the source of these horror story complaints from that sector of the towing industry—I have representatives of the towing industry in the gallery today who have worked with me and with other members in the House to bring forward a really good piece of legislation. The responsible towing industry, like these men and women in the gallery today, recognizes the need for some regulation of this industry. They want it, in the public interest. They want it because they have pride in what they do, and it's that pride in what they do that they've brought to this exercise of working with me in the drafting of this bill. I want to compliment the representatives from the towing industry.

Let me say a few words about some technical aspects of the legislation—the nuts and bolts, how it's actually going to work. First of all, it's important to keep in mind that this is self-regulation. With this bill, we are asking the towing industry to regulate itself. All funding will come from the industry through a variety of revenue streams: licensing of all tow companies; certification of all tow truck drivers; certification of all tow trucks; skills and development training; and penalties that would be imposed. Those things will all generate revenues which will sustain the cost of the self-regulation.

The legislation will establish an effective council and a board of directors, both from the towing industry and the public, with no connection to the industry. Those members will be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor. They will represent the public interest and the consumer. The council will include individuals representing independent tow operators, sole operators, large and small towing companies, law enforcement, the insurance industry, and the municipalities here in Ontario.

The towing council, with the board of directors, will be charged with the responsibility of coming up with a regime that will contemplate, essentially, four things: how a licensing regime should work; how a complaints process regime should work; how a discipline process regime should work; how a standards regime should work. All regulations would be developed by the council and the board of directors.

Just a word on licensing: The bill contemplates that everyone intent on offering towing services to the public would be required to join the Ontario towing council and become licensed. Once licensed and registered, they would be subject to the rules and regulations established and set out by that council.

Right now in Ontario, some municipalities issue a licence and some municipalities don't. Tow truck operators often find themselves in a situation where they've got to have multiple licences, or no licences at all, or a combination of both. They're confused about what the requirements are, especially in an area like the GTA, where the jurisdictions are so closely tight together. None of those licensing regimes to date have standards, an oversight policy or a disciplinary procedure. It's merely

that if you pay the fee, you get a licence and you can operate a tow truck in that municipal jurisdiction.

This bill is not about generating fees for the province; it's about streamlining the regulatory framework to improve accountability, efficiency and quality of service.

With respect to the Ontario towing council, again I refer to the men and women who are here in the gallery. They have all been in the towing industry for a long, long time. They know the towing industry, how it operates in the GTA, in small-town Ontario, in the north. They are bringing their best possible sense of how that towing council should operate, how it should go about setting standards and how it should render discipline when necessary and the like. We are fortunate to have people of this calibre and this experience who are working behind the scenes on this bill.

Let me say a few words about support for the bill. The legislation is fully endorsed by associations and individuals such as Doug Nelson, who's the executive director of the Provincial Towing Association of Ontario; Ralph Palumbo, who's the vice-president of the Insurance Bureau of Canada; Randy Carroll, who's the chief executive officer at the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario; and the Ontario Provincial Police, just to name a few.

The bill has garnered support from a number of towing companies, independent towing operators and automobile associations. There is a considerable number of municipalities, cities and towns that are in support of this legislation. My office has received countless calls of inquiry and support over the past few months.

This is what Mr. Doug Nelson, the chief executive officer of the provincial towing association, said: "This legislation will eliminate barriers imposed by costly municipal licences. It will also promote a higher standard of training and provide better monitoring of prices charged to customers."

Mr. Nelson went on to say, "This bill will be of huge benefit to the general public. It will ensure a higher industry standard of employee training and conduct, improve overall customer service and eliminate price gouging. In addition, it gives our industry an opportunity to become involved in highway traffic incident management ... and work towards improving highway safety and resolving gridlock issues facing Ontario motorists."

The bill is about improving highway traffic incident management. The bill will go a long way in restoring the sometimes tarnished reputation of the towing industry.

It's the leadership in the Ontario towing industry, like the people sitting in the gallery today, that wants to polish, work on and maintain that image. They want to do that in the public interest. They want to ensure that those stories that I'm sure you've all heard, members of this Legislature, over the years—you hear it in your constituency offices; you hear it at church; you hear it at cocktail parties. Everybody has a towing horror story, and these horror stories generate hundreds and sometimes thousands of dollars of expenses.

There's a woman in the middle of the night on a deserted road who calls a tow. It's the luck of the draw

whether she gets a towing operator represented by people such as are in the gallery today and she has a good towing experience, or she gets someone who arrives—sort of a bandit off of the grid system—puts the hook on the car and that's when her horror story starts. It's towed away somewhere. There are huge expenses, and she's frightened.

You can take that story and can replicate it hundreds and thousands of times throughout Ontario with men and women, with sons and daughters who borrowed their parents' cars. It's the luck of the draw. What we're trying to do is bring some consistency, some quality assurance, if you will, to the towing experience. That's what this bill is designed to do.

Essentially, in its last analysis, it's a piece of consumer protection. The sentiment around the province—and I know you've all heard your own stories about this—is that something has to be done about the consumer protection/quality assurance piece. That's what this bill does. It gets the very best people, the most experienced operators in the towing industry, and puts them in charge of a towing council. It tells operators, "You've got to be a member of the towing council to have a licence."

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Once they've got that licence and they're a member of the towing council, then the towing council has some oversight, if you will, regarding fee structure; regarding discipline, if required; and regarding just what the standards should be to ensure a satisfactory consumer experience.

It's for these reasons that I've introduced this legislation, and I urge all members to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Further debate? The member for Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to participate in this debate on this bill. If I'm not mistaken, member from Willowdale, this is the second time this bill has been before the Legislature—the second time. The last time we had a debate on this, the issues were the same. The rationale for bringing it forward was the same. What I suppose your stakeholders are probably wondering is why, if this assembly passed this bill once before, are we back here again attempting to do the same thing?

We welcome people from the industry who are here and thank them for their sense of responsibility in wanting to ensure that there are standards for the industry, province-wide. We know that there are responsible players in this industry, and there are those who are rogues. Unfortunately, it's those who are not conducting themselves ethically who end up putting a pall on the entire industry. So when someone says, "I'm in the towing industry," the immediate reaction on the part of many people is, "Oh, really?" It shouldn't be that way because we know the majority of people in the industry are, in fact, upstanding business people.

I have never had a bad experience with a tow truck and neither has anyone in my family. One of the most important cards in my wallet and in my wife's wallet—one of the first things I did for my daughter and then my

son when they got their driver's licences was to get them a CAA membership, because I didn't want them to be in a situation where, first of all, they were subject to a situation where perhaps they were not going to be treated ethically. So my experience has always been very positive.

I'm frustrated about the private members' business process in this place. I say to the people who are here that I wish you well. But in this place, private members' business is all too often a political game more than it is a legislative process. What I mean by that is that in the same way that you experienced the last time that you came here, this bill was debated, it was passed and the government of the day does nothing with it.

I had a similar bill that I presented to this Legislature many years ago, only it had to do with the collision repair industry. Today, that bill—by the way, Speaker, you'll remember. It went through second reading and passed as it went here. It went to committee; we had extensive hearings. It was referred back to this place and we had third reading. It was passed unanimously, and it received royal assent. Where is that bill today? It's gathering dust on the shelves of the Minister of Government Services. Nothing has been done.

As I read through this bill presented by the honourable member from Willowdale, I looked at it and I thought many of the words are actually very similar to the bill that I proposed here for the collision repair industry: a provincial council; self-regulation; bring in standards of conduct; ensure that there are appropriate measures of discipline—and it's nowhere. I say to the member from Willowdale, look, I wish you well, but if I was a betting guy, which I'm not, I wouldn't bet this is going anywhere. I don't want to discourage you, but this government has absolutely no track record of bringing private members' business, regardless of how good it is, into law. So I wish you well.

I want to say, in the time that I have, that there are some concerns.

Interjection.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, would you ask the member across to just behave himself?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order.

Mr. Frank Klees: I simply want to read into the record some concerns. Should this bill go to committee, I think there are issues we need to address, because I do have some concerns. One of them has to do with the inspection provisions that are in here. I'm actually surprised that the member for Willowdale crafted this bill the way he did. It goes to the powers of an investigator. First of all, the complaints committee, under this legislation, has the authority to appoint an investigator—fair enough. But then when you look at powers of the investigator—and we don't know who that is—that investigator is empowered to do a lot of things here that, quite frankly, if I was in the towing business, I would say, "You'd better have a second look at this, because I wouldn't want to be on the receiving end of what is empowered here."

Not only is that inspector empowered to do a lot of things like removing documents from my place of business, there's a power of entry. According to this, "An investigator may enter lands or business premises, other than a private dwelling, without the consent of the owner or occupier and without a warrant...." I don't know, folks, if that's really what you want to attract into your business. Keep in mind, this is a self-regulatory body. Those people, according to this, need to have no qualifications in terms of law enforcement. There's nothing in here about who they're accountable to, other than the complaints committee.

We know from experience that there are unintended consequences of legislation. At the outset, you start off with good intentions, and whoever that council may be when it's initially formed—we don't know who the members of those councils ultimately will be over time, and to empower a group of people this way without the appropriate checks and balances concerns me greatly.

So that would be a strong objection. I could not support this legislation—if we were voting now for third reading, I could not support this legislation with this the way it is. I wouldn't be responsible in terms of passing this on. However, we're voting for this bill on second reading, which is approval in principle, and so I will support this in principle because I believe that there is a need to bring standards into this industry. There is a need to ensure that the players in this industry know that they have to be accountable for how they conduct business, and so I have no problem supporting the principle of this bill.

But there are a number of other areas that we would have to examine in the course of committee review. Those are, again, the powers of the board, and who in fact sets the entry fee. I know it's your council, but there again, there are going to be some people within the industry—and I've received some correspondence from small business people who are saying, "Let's not have this be a barrier to entry for me to get into the business or to stay in the business." And what is the cost of this going to be? I raise this caution. This is a fairly comprehensive bill in many ways, and there are a lot of functions that this self-regulatory council is going to have to perform. Who's going to pay for that? When you start to assess business people who, in many cases, are already having a hard time making ends meet, and now you lay on top of them the additional fees and assessment for a business advisory council or for a regulatory council, that is yet another story.

1600

I will support this bill, but I have some serious concerns about some of the provisions of this bill that I believe need much further work, and there could be some serious unintended consequences for the well-meaning people within the industry.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'll be sharing my time with the member from Timmins-James Bay, who's also the critic.

I want to say to the member from Willowdale that I supported this bill in 2008, and I'll be supporting it again in 2011. It was good then; it's good today.

But I'm beginning to worry about you, member from Willowdale, because you've introduced a couple of bills, and the government is stiffing you each and every time. I just don't get it. The point is that your bills are, in my mind, good. And in the mind of many here in my caucus, they're good. I just don't understand why it is that your generals constantly put you on the front lines and then let you loose on your own in front of the firing squad. I just don't get it.

The Tories criticize you in the same way saying, "You introduce this bill, and the government doesn't support you." I had the same problem with them for eight and a half years—eight and a half years. It was long and painful, and we couldn't get any bills passed, either.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I'm glad you're getting all your bills passed, Rosie.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Which ones, Tony?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. I'd just ask the honourable members to speak through the Chair, and not directly across to each other.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You're so right. You're not as beautiful as the previous Speaker, but you're so right.

We've got to speak through the Speaker, Mr. Ruprecht, the member from Parkdale—

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: It used to be Parkdale; now, it's Davenport.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Davenport. Thank you for coming. I know you're busy raising a flag somewhere, but—

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: You're not invited from now on.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thanks for leaving, Tony.

I think the bill is a good bill, and the whole point—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Come and join us, member from Davenport. Stick around for a while.

The point is that this bill would set a fee structure and would set disciplinary action against those who obviously are not abiding by the rules. It would create standards, something that the hard-working and honest tow truck operators are doing on a daily basis. These are the folks that are calling for some rules. We don't have any rules at the moment.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: We should.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And I believe we should.

I think the government, through the chief general and the others, should be saying this is a good bill. If it is a good bill that is supported by many, including the opposition, it should be drafted quickly, sent for hearings, of course, and corrected if that's what needs to be done. And then you pass it. If you've got three parties agreeing with it, it shouldn't take that long. What's stopping it? I just don't get it.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: What's the answer?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The answer is that you guys, the soldiers, are not fighting back against your generals;

that's the problem. You've got to be able to, at some point, say to the Premier, "We don't get it. We work with you, and we don't understand why you're not helping us to help you."

I often worry because there are, generally speaking, no regulations in some sectors, and this is a sector that doesn't have any regulations. I often worry about those who self-regulate, like the Technical Standards and Safety Authority. If you recall, they self-regulate, and we had the propane disaster that killed one person. So self-regulation is better than no regulation—

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Member from Davenport, if you don't mind.

Self-regulation is better than no regulation. Sometimes, in my view, it's better to have it regulated by the government so I know that I can go to the Premier right away and beat him up, through question period, Speaker, through you, on a regular basis. The problem with self-regulation sometimes is that it may not be as effective as it could be, but it's better than no regulation whatsoever. In the absence of having a government-regulated industry where the Premier is held accountable directly, self-regulation is the other best thing to do.

So I've got to say, we need consumer protection. The industry is calling for consumer protection. The industry is saying, "We want it," because clearly, there's got to be problems in that sector, which means that there are probably a whole lot of rogue truck operators operating. That's causing a bad name for many of the honest, hard-working folks who are here today. And if they didn't think there was a problem, they wouldn't be here. Clearly they are here today, again—2008, 2011.

It's time for the Liberal backbenchers on my left here and the ones I face to say to the Premier, "Enough. We want you to support us every now and then, because if you don't support us every now and then, we're just not going to be there in the front lines fighting on your behalf." In fact, if you lose that election next time, nobody is going to come and have coffee with you after you lose that election. No one. Well, there might be a few. There might be a few, because the Premier always has a couple of friends who he can rely on for coffee.

You've got to step up. You've got to say, "It's enough. We need you, too." It's a two-way street. This bill is a good bill. I like the fact that you've got a complaints committee and that they're going to have an investigator go in somewhere unannounced because they have discovered, or heard by way of allegations that are presumably credible, and they want to go in there and check things out.

For me, I like that. The member from Newmarket—Aurora doesn't like that, but people like me say, "God bless." If we've got a problem on our hands, I want somebody to get in there quickly and fix it up. That's what I want.

Mr. Frank Klees: You'd be the first one.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But Frank, I leave it to you to decide what you want to do, and maybe you might have another crack at it some other day. I don't know.

But in the meantime, self-regulation is good. The member from Willowdale has been stiff too long. He needs support from the backbenchers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm pleased to rise and speak on Bill 147, brought here by my colleague from Willowdale. Let me give him kudos for making a second attempt to have this done.

I'm supportive of this bill, but I want to share with you a little bit of an experience I had, because I think this is a very important bill and all of us should be concerned about it. It's nice to know that the Insurance Bureau of Canada is here and it's nice to know that the Insurance Brokers Association is here, because this is all about consumer protection and public protection, and to help the reputable towing companies that exist out there, because they've had a problem for a long, long time.

In my previous stint at the city of Toronto, we attempted to revise the bylaw for the towing industry. I sat on the municipal licensing committee, and I have to tell you, it was a very scary couple of months sitting on that committee, attempting to deal with tow truck drivers. It was my first experience of dealing with licensing altogether, because previously in Scarborough we didn't have that particular business.

Mr. Frank Klees: Better be careful. They're listening to you.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Well, it was interesting. When Mr. Zimmer presented this bill to the House, I did receive a couple of phone calls, like you did too.

I want to share with you a story. It's a horror story of a personal friend and a constituent of mine. She had a brand new car. It was about eight months old. It got totalled on the rear end of the car—significant damage, late in the evening. A very elderly person. A tow truck driver gets her car all hitched up, and she says, "I'd like to have my car taken to this particular body shop because that's where I get all my work done." The driver convinced her to go elsewhere, because she was all shaken up, and said, "Not to worry. I'll take you to somebody who will look after your vehicle very well, will take care of it, and I will also give you a ride home. You don't have to worry about getting home."

1610

She got her car back. The insurance company claims person dealt with the claim with the particular body shop where the car was taken in Concord. This person lives in Scarborough. The insurance company received an estimate for all new parts, because the car was only eight months old. There was \$15,000 worth of parts and a couple of thousand dollars' worth of repair work to be done on the car. My constituent and friend received her car back. There were a few things she did not like. She took it back and complained, and they did whatever they could.

This person does not drive on the highway. She only drives on the city streets, so the most she would drive is probably 50 clicks. About a year and three months later,

she loaned her car to her stepson, who actually took it on the highway. He could not control the car. It was pulling all over; it was vibrating all over. She called me, because I'm a close friend, and said, "What do I do?" I said, "You have to call your insurance company. But if you would like me to help you, I will." She said, "Well, why don't you take the car? Here's all my paperwork. Here are all the estimates. See what you can do."

So I took it to a body shop that I knew was certified to work for insurance companies. Lo and behold, the owner put it up on the hoist and the first thing he said was, "This car has had unauthorized repairs that a manufacturer will not support." I called the insurance company, and the adjuster for the insurance company met me at the garage the lady wanted the car to go to in the first place. When they put it up on the hoist, they agreed with my previous garage that the car had been cut in half and a used car was brought in and welded together exactly where the seams were, and it was clearly visible and covered up. The unfortunate thing about her car was that one side of the car was an inch longer than the other side, so there was absolutely no way you could align this vehicle.

I said to the adjuster, "The person who owns this car has told me to get a lawyer and do everything possible to have this vehicle fixed." The adjuster said, "Can I have your keys? You'd better get a ride home, because I'm not going to let you drive this car," and he took the plates off the car. I asked, "What are you going to do to the car?" He said, "The car is going to be scrapped, and we will try to go after the body shop that did the work."

My friend received the full value of the car when she bought it new to go and purchased a new vehicle. The insurance industry has paid for that. But do you know what? It's in all our insurance rates, and we as a government are responsible for working with the insurance rates. We should take action on this. So I leave that with you as a horror story.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank God, finally I have a bill I can support, that I can be proud about.

I want to congratulate the member from Willowdale for bringing such an important issue to us, as he does very often. Despite what has been said before, he has brought many different private members' bills that have been passed, and I want to congratulate him for that.

I had the privilege and honour to meet David Ross in my office in London. He came and spoke to me about the importance of the passage of the bill.

I'm going to support this bill because it's important to create a one-stop shop to organize the whole industry across the province of Ontario.

As the member from Scarborough—Rouge River mentioned, it's dangerous sometimes when you open yourself to a towing company, because you don't know who they are. They might take your car and you won't see your car again. Or they might destroy your car, because some of them have good connections with a mechanic's shop or

body shop, and for some reason they always take the car to those people and they split the cost and the profit.

The most important things in this bill, I believe, are to create regulations across the province of Ontario, to create professionalism in this industry, and also to have some kind of accountability.

I think that's what the member for Willowdale is aiming for in this bill, and also the professional association that is with us today, who came in huge numbers to witness the debate in this House: to create a body to protect the industry, to protect the consumers, to create a safety mechanism across the province. That's why I'm standing up in my place to speak in support and to congratulate the member despite this being introduced twice so far.

Hopefully, this one will pass and become law in Ontario, and all the drivers and the towing industry will be organized and will be regulated and only professionals will join the association and work in the province.

As we mentioned, we don't have one licence across Ontario. We have so many different jurisdictions, different municipalities. Every different municipality has a different licence. Sometimes in the towing industry, they have to go to different municipalities and have a different licence to operate along the 401 or different zoning in the province of Ontario.

In the end, I'm going to support it. I want to congratulate the member and all the attendees with us from the towing association and industry in the province. We're going to work together to establish a rule, a regulation, to support this bill and make it the law in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to, for the second time, congratulate the member for having brought forward this bill. This is basically a repeat of the bill we saw a few years ago. At the time New Democrats voted in favour, and we're going to vote in favour again, because we think it's high time that we have one of two things happen: One is that we move to a self-regulated model, or if the ministry has a hard time with that, let them regulate it.

At the end of the day, I think there's a lot of operators out there who are saying, "We need to make sure that we regulate our industry so that we get rid of the bad apples, so that the vast majority of people in the tow truck business are able to continue doing what they've always done." That is to provide a service to the people of Ontario and to do that in a way that is honest, that is straightforward and that charges people according to the incident that they're involved in.

I, like you and every other member in this assembly, have people in the tow truck business industry who have come to see me over the years, who have been calling for exactly this type of legislation. I remember on the first iteration of your bill, D&L Towing, Bill's Towing, Bupont Motors and a whole bunch of other people came to me in my riding, saying, "We would like you to support this bill." I said, "Listen, this is a no-brainer. We're the government that started self-regulation, and we

understand how important it is for professions and for businesses to be able to regulate themselves rather than having the government regulate them." That would be what I favour. I would rather see them be self-regulated than have the ministry come in.

I have a sense that the ministry has a bit of a problem with this, because when the member introduced the bill the last time, and it passed at second reading, my good friend the member from Trinity-Spadina pointed out, "Why did it not pass into law?" The member has brought a number of bills into this House that I can agree with, and I think they were sound bills that made lots of sense. I think he did some good work. And for whatever reason, the government decided not to pass this bill and bring it into law, when they could have. The forum of private members' hour is to give a chance for these kinds of ideas to go forward. I thought here was a no-brainer. I thought, when we voted on it the first time, that the government would actually pass the bill through the committee process, into third reading and finally enact it.

The government decided not to, so I've got to believe one of two things: The ministry is balking, which is probably the case. The ministry is probably saying, "We would rather not see them self-regulated; we'd rather see some other form of regulation." I guess I'd say to the ministry, if that's the case, you should, through the minister or the parliamentary assistant, be clear and to the point about what your problems are if you don't want to pass this bill. Are you then saying you want to see a form of regulation come from the government? Then at least the tow truck operators would know what the heck to do, and I think that's really the unfortunate part.

I think the second reason is—and I don't believe that's the case—the point that my good friend from Trinity-Spadina and others alluded to. That is, for whatever reason, this member, who I have a lot of respect for—and you can put this in your campaign literature; I'm okay with it. The member has come to the House, and I think he has been a very effective member as far as bringing forward issues, not all of which I agree with, but I think he's brought them forward. I ask myself, why is it that Dalton McGuinty—I should say "the Premier of Ontario"—does not see fit to support a good member's ideas on a good bill such as this one? I'll let people draw their own conclusion.

1620

This bill does have to go to committee. If we pass this at second reading—which I know we will because I know we're supporting it as New Democrats, the Conservatives are supporting it as Conservatives and I've got to imagine that the Liberals are going to support you this time around. So it will pass at second reading. But I do think it needs to get to committee, because here's the nub: No matter how good an idea is, you really need to get a chance at committee to allow the public to have its say. I think we need to have some form of public hearing in order to allow the public—those who are in favour, those who are opposed—to come forward to make sure that we understand what the issues are so that when we

go forward with the bill, we do so in a way that is consistent with those issues that have been raised at committee and we try to make the bill better.

On behalf of the New Democratic Party, my leader, Andrea Horwath, and as critic for the NDP on transportation, I wish to give support to this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to rise in support of Bill 147, which has been tabled by my colleague from Willowdale here.

As we've heard, Bill 147 proposes to set up a self-regulatory system for the towing industry to protect consumers and protect road safety. I, too, would like to emphasize that there are lots of good towing operators. For some reason, our car always breaks down in Muskoka or has trees fall on it. The lovely towing company that we call in Gravenhurst is great, so we've had lots of good personal experience. But I, like many other members, have had stories from constituents which are quite appalling.

A few weeks ago, I had a young lady come into my office. She had been in an accident at 401 and Guelph Line. She had been injured. The car was a bit of a mess. As the ambulance came to pick her up, because she had been injured—I tell this to the member from Newmarket–Aurora—she pulled her CAA card out and said to the police officer, “Please, here's the CAA number for Guelph. I want you to take the car to...,” and she named the body shop in Guelph. They said, “Oh, no, no,” and gave her another card and said, “Here's the operator that we call.” Eventually, she hooked up with her father in the hospital and they got the card and looked at it. It was a Mississauga towing company. Where the accident was, Milton would have been logical; Rockwood would have been logical; getting a tow truck from Guelph would be logical; getting a tow truck from Mississauga was not logical. But nevertheless, her car had gone to Mississauga. In fact, it hadn't even gone to the original tower; it had gone to somebody else who had been referred, but eventually they found the car.

They arranged for the tow truck driver to bring the car to Guelph to the body shop she wanted in the first place. The tow truck operator shows up at the body shop and says to the poor young lady working in the front office of the body shop, “I need \$1,000 cash.” The young lady says, “I don't have \$1,000 cash.” “No cash, no car. I'll take it back to Mississauga. Next time I bring it back, it'll be \$2,000 cash.” The poor young lady panics. She said, “I can give you a business cheque. That's how we do business. I can't give you \$1,000 cash. I don't have \$1,000 cash.” She called the dad of the young lady. The dad comes. The dad says, “I don't have \$1,000 cash. Will you take a cheque or credit card?” “No, it has to be cash.” So he said, “I'll go to the bank.” He went to the bank. The tow truck followed him to the bank, blocked him into the parking at the bank and wouldn't let him out of the bank parking lot until he had produced \$1,000 in cash.

That's why this is absolutely necessary, and I hope all members will support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm happy to rise in support of the member from Willowdale's bill as well. I think it's a bill that definitely needs the opportunity to be supported for second reading in this House. Like all the other bills we've seen this afternoon—they're all good private members' bills. They should all be moved forward and we should be debating them in committee. I hope that when we vote here in a couple of minutes, everybody will support each of the pieces of legislation that was introduced here today and give them the opportunity to move forward and into committee. It's really sad that you have to come back a second time with the same bill when you're a member of the government, and you're a very valuable member of the government because you do a lot of the dirty work for them in committee and in some of the things you do here—but not as much of the dirty work that the member from London–Fanshawe does.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: A lot of hard work.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Oh, the hard work. Yes, the hard work, but not the difficult heavy lifting that the member from London–Fanshawe does, because he sometimes starts out debating against the bill, and by the time he's done with his comments, he's voting in favour of the bill. We never know where he's actually coming from, but we love to hear you. We've got you on tape on this one, because it's going to be good for our campaign literature. So thank you very much for that.

It's good to see so many of the members of the tow truck industry here too. I do hope you'll also think of my private member's bill that allows tow trucks to be put in the same category, the “slow down, move over” legislation. I want to thank CAA again for all the work they did on that, because it too is a valuable bill that should be moved forward and become law in this province.

I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words, and thank you very much. Again, I hope everybody supports all three bills that were presented here this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The member from Willowdale has two minutes for his response.

Mr. David Zimmer: I just want to address a concern that was raised by the member for Newmarket–Aurora; that is, what parameters will there be on the authority of the council when they're investigating matters? Section 13 of the act sets out the objects of the council:

“1. To regulate the towing industry in Ontario.

“2. To govern the persons” and so forth; and

“3. To establish, maintain and develop standards” and so on.

Subsection 13(2) says, “In carrying out its objects, the council shall serve the public interest,” and then it sets out some details about the public interest.

Then, in section 20, “Powers of the minister”—and this is important:

“(1) The minister may review the activities of the board and ask the board to undertake activities that, in his

or her opinion, are necessary and advisable to carry out the intent of this act...

"(2) The minister may advise the board with respect to the implementation of this act and the regulations and with respect to the methods that the board uses or proposes to use to enforce the regulations and to implement its policies."

So I say to the member from Newmarket, the plan is to allow the towing council to set up the rules on how they're going to enforce the rules and regulations, including investigation and discipline, with the idea in mind that whatever the council decides to do always has to be in the public interest. And there's another step built in where the minister, in effect, can step in if the minister or the government feels that the towing council has overreached itself perhaps or hasn't taken into account certain things that the government thinks should be respected in terms of disciplinary matters and enforcing the rules and regulations. That's the safety feature, if you will, in it. But I do have confidence in the council to do the right thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business has now expired. It's time to vote.

ONTARIO ONE CALL ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR ONTARIO ONE CALL

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll first deal with ballot item number 4, standing in the name of Mr. Bailey.

Mr. Bailey has moved second reading of Bill 180, An Act respecting Ontario One Call Ltd. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Bailey, do you have a committee choice?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I move that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill go to the Legislative Assembly committee? So ordered.

PUBLIC SECTOR SALARY DISCLOSURE AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA DIVULGATION DES TRAITEMENTS DANS LE SECTEUR PUBLIC

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 5.

Ms. Horwath has moved second reading of Bill 177, An Act to amend the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, 1996 with respect to disclosure of severance payments. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."
All those opposed will please say "nay."
In my opinion, the ayes have it.
We will call in the members after the next vote.

TOWING INDUSTRY ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR L'INDUSTRIE DU REMORQUAGE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 6.

Mr. Zimmer has moved second reading of Bill 147, An Act to regulate the motor vehicle towing industry in Ontario. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Zimmer?

Mr. David Zimmer: The Standing Committee on General Government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill be referred to the general government committee? So ordered.

PUBLIC SECTOR SALARY DISCLOSURE AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA DIVULGATION DES TRAITEMENTS DANS LE SECTEUR PUBLIC

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1630 to 1635.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Ms. Horwath has moved second reading of Bill 177. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Brownell, Jim
Chudleigh, Ted

DiNovo, Cheri
Dunlop, Garfield
Hardeman, Ernie
Horwath, Andrea
Klees, Frank

Marchese, Rosario
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Prue, Michael
Tabuns, Peter

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Balkissoon, Bas
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Best, Margaret
Colle, Mike
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Kular, Kuldip
Levac, Dave
Mangat, Amrit
McMeekin, Ted
Moridi, Reza

Phillips, Gerry
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Sousa, Charles
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 15; the nays are 24.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All matters relating to private members' public business have now been completed.

Before I call the next order of the day, let's once again wish our pages well in their lives. Thank you.

Orders of the day.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The minister has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House is adjourned until Tuesday, May 3, at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1638.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Samia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakubuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	
Vacant	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

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Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Kim Craitor, Bob Delaney
Garfield Dunlop, Phil McNeely
Yasir Naqvi, John O'Toole
Maria Van Bommel
Clerks / Greffiers: Valerie Quioc Lim, Sylwia Przedziecki

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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
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Jim Wilson
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Reza Moridi
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Ted Chudleigh, Mike Colle
Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos
Reza Moridi, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yasir Naqvi
Bas Balkissoon, Steve Clark
Joe Dickson, Sylvia Jones
Amrit Mangat, Yasir Naqvi
Michael Prue, Mario Sergio
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Shurman
Wayne Arthurs, Aileen Carroll
France Gélinas, Jerry J. Ouellette
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals
Peter Shurman, Norman W. Sterling
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
David Caplan, Kim Craitor
Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
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